MINE IS THINE

BY

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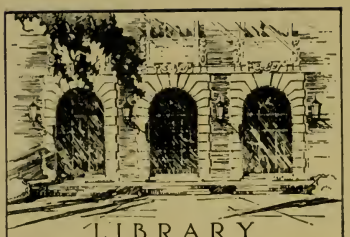

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MINE IS THINE

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MINE IS THINE

A NOVEL

BY

LAURENCE W. M. LOCKHART

AUTHOR OF 'FAIR TO SEE,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

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MINE IS THINE.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Not a cloud in the sky: the misty bloom of sunrise on the mountains: a voiceless breeze hovering over the landscape, and drawing from all its lurking-places the goodly fragrance of the hills: great stillness checkered by faint moorland harmonies—whispering of the heather, and silvery chiming of many unseen rivulets. Thus graciously did the eagerly-wished-for day of the deer-drive greet Cosmo, as he looked forth at the rising of the sun. Nature, as is her wont in our moods of stronger emotion, seemed to enter into communion with him and to offer him her sympathy, and he, as is the wont of the imaginative, drew presages from her aspects. Thus, though he had neither prospect nor scheme

for the day in front of him, though he could foresee nothing, in the way of opportunity, which it might bring forth, he yet drew from this fair and solemn sunrise a presentiment, strong as conviction, that a grand turning-point in his destiny was about to be reached. Nor did he confront the prospect with agitation; for, as his eye ranged over the brightening hills, he seemed to read promise in their growing lustre: and from the far and clear horizon—the home of hope—hope's message seemed to come to him, in the balmy breath and murmuring music of the morning. And so, exalted rather than depressed by the sense of an impending crisis, he went forth, in good heart and hope, to the rendezvous on Dunerlacht.

When he and Phil Denwick arrived at the spot they found a large company already assembled. It included all the gentlemen from the castle, besides several neighbours: nor was the fair sex unrepresented; for Lady Bugles, Mrs Crock, and Miss Snapsley (in the secret hope of being permitted to share the vigil of some sportsman in his *cache*) had protested that they would not for worlds be absent from a gathering which promised to be so rich in picturesque elements. The collapse of Mrs

Ravenhall's schemes had so far restored her to herself that she was relieved from perpetual sentry duty, and being once more able to consult her own tastes, she did so by promptly emancipating herself from thraldom to "the picturesque" and other objects of her recent dramatic enthusiasm. Thus, though Esmè in her quality of hostess was present, the scene was not adorned by her, hitherto inevitable, guide, philosopher, and friend.

All but a week—it seemed a year to Cosmo—had elapsed since he had held speech with Esmè. If for him the interval had been a time of trial, for her it had at all events mitigated the painful feelings produced by the events of their last meeting. Thus, though she met him with some obvious agitation of manner, a sudden brightness which beamed in her face, suggested not so much embarrassment as some happier emotion which she had not the power or the art instantly to conceal. Few words passed between them.

"I was beginning to think," said Cosmo, "that I was never going to see you again."

"Is it so long since we met?" replied Esmè, who was, after all, a daughter of Eve.

"To me it appears a century."

"I fear from that that your sport has not been good?"

"Oh, the sport! I was not thinking of *it*. I believe it has been good enough."

"And surely you cannot complain of the weather?"

"No, we can't complain of that—but bright weather can't do everything for us."

"Perhaps the birds have been wild?"

"No, I think not particularly wild."

A pause, during which Cosmo felt his presentiment fading.

"I wonder," continued Esmè, "if there are *really* many deer in the woods just now!"

"Ah! I wonder if there are!"

"Papa is very confident about it."

"Yes, he seemed to say so."

"Do you expect to kill many?"

"This kind of sport is always a lottery."

Here the dialogue was interrupted. What a sequel to a week of passionate reverie and transcendental dreams! What a lapse it seemed to show from the footing on which that horrible old woman had found them by the ruin! Such is love; seeming so far when it is so near, still feigning to retire when it is on the very threshold. But experience and philosophy are dumb

on such occasions, and Cosmo felt discouraged and miserable.

The dialogue was interrupted by Lord Ribston. "The ladies," he said, "seem to wish to go through the whole entertainment. Lady Bugles has secured a place in the Marquis's *cache*, provided all the other ladies agree to go. Now, what do you say, Miss Douglas? Will you honour me?"

"Thank you, Lord Ribston, I am sorry that I cannot."

"But why? If it is for some superstition about chaperonage, why not go with Lord Germistoune? Do be sociable! There are long intervals between the beats, and pleasant walks between them. Come, Miss Douglas! have pity on us. Don't deprive us of the light of your countenance."

"Thank you; but it is really impossible. If for no other reason, I have something else to do. I have to visit a poor old woman who is sick on the other side of the hill; but the other ladies are quite independent of me, of course."

"I never knew such a district as this is for sick old women," cried Lord Ribston impatiently. "Why can't the hags die at once and be done with it? And you are resolved?"

"Yes, indeed, I am."

"Then I shall vote against all the others going. Their chattering would ruin our sport."

"Well," said Mrs Crock, who now came up, "is it all arranged? *Are* we to go, Lord Ribston? *Please* don't say 'no,'" she added winningly, as children coax and win.

"I have nothing to do with the arrangements," said the noble brute gruffly.

"But you said you would arrange it."

"And I have not succeeded. There is only one arrangement I can answer for, and that is, that I am going to shoot by myself." And so saying, he went away, darkly sulking.

"Poor Lord Ribston! Something has vexed him. I am *so* sorry!" said Mrs Crock, tenderly alive to the sorrows of a coronet, and £30,000 a-year, still undisposed of.

"I can't say I share your compassion," said Esmè, with a good deal of warmth. "He behaves like a spoiled child, and is extremely rude."

Tom Wyedale was of course present to-day, and without a trace of affliction in his face or manner—very much, indeed, the contrary. He had found it impossible to support the part of

the disconsolate lover with any sort of consistency; and, after twenty-four hours of sorry acting, had abandoned the attempt with characteristic *sang froid.* And now the pleasant reaction from financial pressure, and that other trouble which had temporarily disturbed him, was frankly evidenced by the more than ordinary exuberance of his gaiety.

The "picturesque" element upon which the ladies had vaguely reckoned, was exclusively represented by the Marquis, who was habited in a wonderful *jäger* costume, combining the more florid features of many eras and nationalities, and secured to his person by a multiplicity of straps, cords, and tassels, which would have done credit to the ingenuity of any age or country. In addition to various other warlike weapons, his equipment included a large-sized bugle-horn; and upon this, while the Marquis was engaged in an animated conversation, Tom Wyedale surreptitiously blew a blast of terrific volume and dissonance, which awoke a thousand echoes of wood and hill. Lord Germistoune, who was "gouty," and occupied in haranguing his head-keeper on the duties of the day, turned with an angry start. "What is that?" he cried. "Who did that?" Tom had dropped the

bugle, and was demurely examining the lock of his rifle. "Who has got that infernal instrument?" continued his lordship. "The Marquis," said Tom, "has got no end of infernal machines tied to his body. I shouldn't wonder if one of them had gone off."

"Il est à vous, M. le Marquis?" cried Lord Germistoune, "vous avez un cor de chasse?"

"Mais, oui, M. Milor, naturellement—à la chasse, comme à la chasse."

"Et vous l'avez sonné?"

"Non, non! Pas du tout. Ce diable de Torm Wyedale qui est si plein de méchanceté ——"

"Wyedale, I am surprised—I consider that you have been guilty of——"

"My dear Lord Germistoune, I only wanted to see, in the interests of us all, whether the horn was real or a dummy. I felt that if it were real, any hope of sport might be abandoned. The Marquis is not the man to have a thing of the sort handy without using it. I do think he ought, so far, to be disarmed."

"M. le Marquis," said Lord Germistoune, "le cor est absolument défendu!"

"Comment, monsieur?"

"Défendu—absolument."

"Mais, monsieur, il faut bien faire sortir les cerfs, n'est ce pas?"

"Non! non! non! Donnez le moi, je vous en prie, monsieur."

After some discussion, the Marquis reluctantly surrendered the bugle.

"Here!" cried his lordship, "some of you men take it away!"

"I'll tak't, my lord," said old Davidson, who was present to assist in posting the guns. "Dod!" he exclaimed, after bearing it off and curiously inspecting it, "what'll he be for bringing neist? A drum, maybe! or a pie-annie—wha kens?" and then added, as he stowed it away in his game-bag, "There! it'll no disturb us noo, onyway."

This high-handed act of confiscation being completed, Lord Germistoune gave them all a lecture on the necessity of silence and circumspection, when posted.

"Our deer," he said, "are singularly acute and suspicious. I have also to request that hinds may be considered sacred; and let me add, that roe-deer are not our object to-day, and ought not to be fired at."

"Vous comprenez, M. le Marquis? Point de biche? point de chevreuil?"

"Parfaitement, M. Milor," replied the Marquis, who, however, approached the day's sport with misty views as to sex and species, and with perfectly catholic intentions as to the use of his weapons.

"It is now time, I think, to get into our positions," said his lordship. "Adieu, ladies! *Au revoir* at luncheon."

The party then started, under the leadership of Innes, the Dunerlacht keeper, with Mr Davidson for his coadjutor. Lady Bugles, with some audacity, accompanied them, attaching herself to the Marquis, whom she had victimised, as she hoped, for the day, and who brought up the rear of the column. This latter circumstance caused her presence with the party to be unobserved for some little time; but it was at length detected by Lord Ribston, who promptly reported it to his host.

"Surely," he said, "that old woman is not coming with us?"

"What old woman?" cried the old lord hastily, and stopping.

"Lady Bugles. There she is with the Marquis—just behind Wyedale."

"Oh! this is contrary to all rule! distinctly preposterous! I must give her her *congé* at once."

Accordingly, when she came up, his lordship said, "I think, Lady Bugles, it will be more prudent if you return now. Our path becomes intricate, and you will find it difficult to make your way back alone."

"Oh! but I did not mean to go back. The Marquis kindly insists on my accompanying him on his post."

"It distresses me to thwart you, and disappoint the Marquis. But this is against our rules. Ladies *never* accompany the guns in our drives. Conversation would be inevitable, and our deer are remarkably wary and sensitive."

"I shall promise not to open my lips, Lord Germistoune."

"It distresses me to be inexorable; but even were you silent, your dress would hardly fail to attract the deer's attention." His eye rested on her head-gear, which, roughly speaking, consisted of a huge bird of paradise posed on her ladyship's head in the attitude of earnest incubation. "I fear," he continued, "that we cannot relax our rule. To do so would create a precedent. I fear we must positively say '*Au revoir!*'"

There was no resisting this, and Lady Bugles sorrowfully withdrew, to the unfeigned delight

of the Marquis, who, watching the tail of the bird of paradise, as it flashed like a thing of glory in its retreat through the woods, murmured to Tom Wyedale, with his face wreathed in grins—

"L'amour s'en va,
Cahin-caha."

They had a considerable walk, as the scheme was to take the most distant beat first, and work, in a sense, homewards. This involved an ascent of the hill, till they were clear of the woods, when they passed along the lower edge of the deer-forest to the upper extremity of three successive and parallel glens, up which the deer were to be driven to the open hill. The formation of the ground was remarkable, and lent itself to the sport of the day. The three glens—probably the beds of glaciers in the old world, as their dividing ridges would be the remnants of moraines—were deeply wooded, and formed connecting avenues, as it were, between the treeless forest and the woods which, to the extent of two or three thousand acres, covered the vale below. The divisions, of which the glens were the centre, on the mountain side, were prolonged into the valley, either naturally or by clearance; so that the woods were pretty

equally divided into three sections, each with its corresponding glen, and each separated from its neighbours by wide glades. Thus there was a fair chance that, in a well-conducted drive, each beat might, to some extent, be productive.

When they reached the top of the farthest glen, the keepers, Innes and Davidson, at once assumed the air of conspirators, speaking in breathless whispers, moving with cat-like stealth, and repressing any untoward sound by gestures, silent but peremptory. Here the Marquis gave much trouble.

"Enfin! cela va commencer!" he cried aloud, and rubbing his hands.

"Whist, sir! whist!" whispered Innes.

The Marquis then whistled, which was similarly rebuked; and then lighted a cigar from a Vesuvian, which went off with a report like a pistol's; whereupon the keeper came softly up to him, and, to his great astonishment, quietly took away the cigar, and placed it on an adjacent rock, murmuring that it might be reclaimed by the owner at the end of the drive. He then whispered a few terse rules of conduct to be observed by the Marquis—

"You will not taak; you must not smock; you will not whustle anny; and, if you should

have ockeshun to blaw your nawse, it will not do to be blawin' it into this glens till aal is over."

"Que diable! qu'est ce qu'il veut dire?" cried the Marquis; but he was met, on all sides, with —"whist! whist! whist! hush! hush! hush!" accompanied by looks of warning and rebuke.

"Ce sont de vrais fous!" he muttered; "feesht! feesht! feesht!—foosh! foosh! foosh! Bah! on dirait que ce sont de canards enrhumés."

Then the head-keeper, after posting Lord Germistoune and Captain Berkeley in ambush in the open, took with him six of the party, handing over the remainder to Davidson, and then each leader started with his following in single file, down opposite sides of the glen, to the various *caches* or places of ambush previously prepared, and echeloned with all engineering skill, so as to guard against accident. Presently Lord Germistoune beheld the head-keeper's division stealthily returning; and Innes himself, halting the remainder at the edge of the wood, emerged on to the open with the Marquis, and advancing to the post of Captain Berkeley, removed that gentleman, without comment, and in his place left the Marquis, to the ever-increas-

ing bewilderment of the latter. The subsequent explanation to Lord Germistoune was perfectly simple — "He was offerin' to fire at a rinnin' rabbit in the wood, wi' his rifle and a', so I brocht him back to where he would not be able to do sae mickle misscheef."

The party again disappeared into the woods, over which the deepest silence reigned for the next half-hour. At last, from the far distance, a faint halloo came; and then another and another and many others, rapidly multiplying and waxing in strength. Stealthy rustlings, patterings of hesitating feet and hoofs, with pauses and recurrences; crackling of branches, sounds of quick-drawn breath. Such phenomena soon began to stir the pulses of the sportsmen on the lower posts, and, in obedience to them, many a barrel was levelled in the improvised loopholes—only to be withdrawn—as a mountain-hare went warily by, or a troop of roe-deer trotted up and halted to listen, and trotted on again, offering temptations hard to resist.

The blended shouts of the beaters kept swelling in melodious volume, broken every now and then into short, sharp cries, as some beast of the forest was viewed; but as yet no shot was fired. The tide of sound rolled up the glen. At last

individual tones and words were distinguishable, mingled with the crisp rattling of the beaters' sticks against stem and branch. The end was approaching and not a shot fired!

Suddenly a terrific uproar arose all along the line. If lions and tigers had been careering in swarms about the woods, the agitation of the voices could not have been more frantic. There was no doubt as to its meaning. The true quarry had been raised at last, and the beaters, bent on driving it into the fatal defile, were guarding against any attempt which it might make to break back or to right or left. Presently, on a clear space, just below the entrance of the pass, a noble stag emerged and paused irresolute, with head erect and heaving flanks; then, urged by a closer shout, sprang forward across the open, and plunged into the shadows of the glen beyond.

A flash! a sharp report! but Lord Ribston's aim had not been true. The stag bounded into the air, and then, though it carried away a heavy wound in the haunch, rushed madly on, crashing through the coppice, wild with terror and pain. Another report! and, this time untouched, but with ever-increasing speed, the stag dashed on. And now the top of the defile

was all but reached, and the free air of the open forest began to promise refreshment, and the rocks and heather of the longed-for sanctuary were before the eyes of the fugitive. One more bound and it was clear of the treacherous glen, and, with new vigour, sped toward the mountain, where hope lay. But though it had escaped the wood, perils followed after. Ambushed on its upper verge, so as to command the open, Tom Wyedale, warned by the sounds which had reached him, sat cool and alert, expecting his opportunity. Without haste or flurry he raised his rifle as the stag swept past him, half hidden by the trees, and without ceasing to cover it, waited till the doomed animal had emerged to some distance on the moor. Then he fired, and with a mighty leap into the air, the noble beast lay prostrate and quivering in the heather. Tom gave one quick glance at his victim, and then quietly proceeded to reload.

In no such stoical spirit was the incident observed by the Marquis de Saut du Loup, from his coigne of vantage up above. Breathless with excitement he beheld the deer break cover; his rifle went up to his shoulder on the instant, nor is it doubtful that had not Tom

forestalled him, he would have at once drawn trigger, regardless that a swarm of beaters, not to mention several posted guns, were in the direct line of his fire. When the animal fell, he jumped out of his *cache*, and was rushing down to inspect it; but some peremptory signals from Lord Germistoune, who was posted within sight, caught his eye, and sent him back to his ambush. Not, however, for very long. For suddenly the stricken stag, albeit in the death-agony, struggled to its feet, and, with lowered head and tottering limbs, again began to stagger up the hill. This was too much for the Marquis. He was out like a flash of lightning, and, tearing down the hill, met the poor beast as it was about to fall for the last time. Before that event took place, however, the Marquis, reserving his fire till within a yard of his mark, let off both barrels simultaneously into the flank of the deer, producing a breach of half a foot or so in diameter. The victim fell stone dead; and the slaughterer, in the absence of the bugle, upon which he would now have sounded the *mort*, broke into jubilant cheers, waving his hat, and dancing round the carcass in childlike glee. A sudden thought then seemed to take him, and, drawing his

couteau de chasse, he knelt down, and with that weapon, and a small saw which formed part of his mysterious armament, proceeded to decapitate the deer. This done, he bore the head off in triumph to his ambush, on reaching which, he turned in the direction of Lord Germistoune's post, and, with another cheer, held up the trophy for his host's admiration. He lordship acknowledged the compliment by shaking his fist very ferociously at the Marquis, who, doomed to perpetual surprise and bewilderment, subsided into his lair, muttering—

"Maintenant je prétends que M. Milor est jaloux! Peste! j'en suis content. Ho! ho! le vieux grognard est diantrement jaloux! Ho! ho!"

Presently the keepers, after passing up the defile, and collecting the posted guns, made their appearance with them in the open.

"There will be something down to you, I'm thinkin', Mr Wyedale?" said Innes.

"Something!" cried Tom, who, imperturbably easy in ordinary matters, was now white with indignation. "Something!—there *was* as fine a stag as you would wish to see; but that confounded Frenchman has blown it to atoms, and hacked it to pieces with saws and pickaxes

and all sorts of devilish things. There! look at it!"

Indeed, what between Lord Ribston's contribution and the crater-like breach effected by the Marquis, it was a lamentable spectacle. Innes held up his hands: speech altogether failed him.

"Dod!" said Davidson, who, having no deer in his own diocese, took a non-sporting view of the business — "Dod! I ne'er saw meat sae notawriously abaised—I *wull* say that."

The Marquis, breathless with excitement, and brandishing the stag's head, now ran up to the party, as they stood in horrified inquest over the mangled remains.

"C'est moi qui ai tué la bête fauve! Moi! Saut du Loup!" he cried. "Voici la tête! la voici! la voici! Hoorah!" Instead of the congratulations he had anticipated, he was met with a reproachful silence. "Diantre! est ce qu'ils sont tous fous et tous jaloux?" he thought, in much discomfiture.

Lord Germistoune came slowly up in a state of fearful dignity. He could not trust himself to address the Marquis directly.

"Innes," he said, "you will see that this *object* is buried in the afternoon; and take that

head now, and throw it into—into perdition. We must try to forget this abominable occurrence. Gentlemen, let us now go to the next beat." Then he moved gloomily off: but before the next beat began, gave private directions to Innes to post the Marquis (who only relinquished the *corpus delicti* after a stout resistance) where there was some reasonable prospect that human life, at least, would not be sacrificed. "I am a courageous man," he said, "but I shall not soon forget what even I have endured for the last hour in that person's neighbourhood."

When Lord Germistoune alluded to a Marquis of the *ancienne noblesse*, as a *person*, and to an underling, it may gathered that his sufferings had been indeed poignant. On the next beat, the Marquis was accordingly posted by himself, and pretty far out in the open, where, from the nature of things, temptation was not likely to present itself. But here, no longer under his host's supervision, he whiled the tedium of his vigil by indulging in all the relaxations forbidden by Innes, besides keeping up a dropping fire with his rifle at such crows and hares as happened to pass within half a mile or so of his post. Thus, though no large

game came his way, he amused himself very fairly; and, indeed, the recollection of the *bête fauve* which he had annihilated, would have made *ennui* in any case impossible. This drive was more productive than the previous one: Tom Wyedale was again successful, while Lord Germistoune himself killed a stag; and these two angry sportsmen being thus partially appeased, the third and last drive was approached under happier auspices.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The scene of their final operations was in the glen nearest to Dunerlacht. Cosmo, who had as yet had no sport, was well posted towards its upper extremity, commanding an open ride leading to the moor. Little heart or interest had he in the day's sport. The few words he had exchanged with Esmè had damped him by their indifference; and, self-tormenting, the burthen of his thoughts was all the morning this — that the week of their separation had obliterated the first traces of a warmer interest in him, which he had begun to dare to hope were discernible in her. Some one, perhaps, had been making mischief; and who more likely than Mrs Ravenhall, with her obvious designs? or some one, perhaps, had been successfully using his opportunities. Lord Ribston had possibly abandoned his *nonchalant* method of love-making, and, with devotion and earnestness

aiding his overwhelming advantages, might now be winning the place which he himself had manifestly forfeited. Women were fickle, and never more liable to change than during the period of dawning partiality. Cosmo, thus sadly musing, was little affected by the din of the beaters, the rush and crashing of invisible deer, the crack of rifles, the silences, so full of mystery and suspense, and all the other incidents and phases of sylvan venary.

The range of woods to be beaten, this time, was considerably more extensive than on either of the previous occasions; and the delay between the posting of the guns and the audible approach of the beaters, was proportionately long. But the interval was not devoid of excitement; for the Marquis, at last posted within the woods, and emboldened by recent immunity, carried on his guerilla practices, and kept such animals as chanced to be harbouring in the upper glen in a state of continued restlessness. More than once had Cosmo been roused from his meditations by the near approach of promising sounds; and at last, and not very long after he had been posted, several roe-deer (the embargo on which had, this time, been removed) came dashing down towards him,

from the opposite side of the ride. Cosmo brought his gun to his shoulder. Suddenly the roe halted, then wheeling about, galloped back; and he, following the troop with his barrels, withheld his fire till the deer he had singled out should reach a certain clear space in the wood. It was just gaining this spot, and his finger was closing on the trigger, when, with a loud cry of horror, he lowered his weapon. Good reason had he for his agitation. Across the line of his vision, as he was about to fire, passed the fair girl for whom he would have given his own life a hundred times. Esmè moving down the ride, unconscious of danger, was watching the roe-deer, as they fled up the opposite bank, and at Cosmo's wild exclamation, she started violently and looked round. His gun was lowered, so she knew not of the escape which she had just made; and when Cosmo ran down to her in speechless agitation, she merely made a hurried apology for disturbing the game. "I thought," she said, "that this glen had been beaten first, and that I could do no mischief by coming back from the cottages through the wood. I will go back now as quickly as I can," and she turned to go. Cosmo's voice shook so that he could not speak, but he took her hand

and detained her. Esmè looked up in amazement.

"What is wrong, Mr Glencairn?" she said.

"Danger!" muttered Cosmo; "you must not go."

"Oh! but I must indeed."

Cosmo said nothing; for all his answer he led her back to his own ambush.

Silently, and almost mechanically, he spread his plaid on the ground for her, his hands trembling violently all the while; for, indeed, as he realised the narrowness of her escape, and the awfulness of the tragedy which had all but befallen both, his agitation became more and more irrepressible. When he had arranged a sheltered seat for her, he turned and motioned her to it. She was startled by the wild look in his eyes, and the ghastly pallor of his face, on which the cold drops stood, and the tremor which seemed to shake his frame like an ague.

"Mr Glencairn!" she cried in alarm, "has there been an accident? have you been hurt? you look dreadfully ill. Do say what has happened." He sank down beside her, covering his face with his hands; but he said nothing; and, for long, the silence was only broken by the sound of his deep and troubled breathing.

"Can I do nothing for you?" said Esmè, at last.

Cosmo looked up but did not answer.

"Are you better now?" she continued anxiously.

"It is no bodily illness," he replied.

"What then?"

"It is horror."

"Mr Glencairn!" Then Cosmo's voice came back to him, and he broke forth in rapid utterance, "You have escaped a deadly peril; you do not know how narrowly; if you had gone on, the danger would have been repeated. You have escaped death by a hair's-breadth—and by my hand. I, too, have escaped death; for how could I have lived, if you had died? I thank God for His mercy. He has saved you and delivered me."

"I do not understand. Something must have happened which I know nothing of."

"My gun was raised, the trigger was all but drawn as you were passing; if it had been drawn, your life must have been sacrificed. Do you wonder now at my agitation?"

It was natural that Esmè, who had not actually seen the danger, and who, moreover, was of no weak and hysterical nature, should be

much less affected by Cosmo's statement than was he by the event in which he had been the main actor. And so, though she looked very grave, she betrayed no agitation, and only said, in a low voice, "I am thankful for my preservation." Then, after a pause, she continued—"But now that the danger is past, pray do not be so distressed, Mr Glencairn. Whatever had happened, it would have been by no fault of yours. I myself would have been alone to blame."

"Ah! fault! blame!—I do not speak of that," cried Cosmo, wildly. In a supreme calamity we think of *it*, not of its cause. There is bitterness which nothing can add to."

"Do be calm, Mr Glencairn. Mercifully, no calamity has happened. I am sure we are both devoutly thankful to God for that; and now there is no cause for distress, but altogether the reverse."

For a long time Cosmo sat silent, his agitation slowly subsiding, and the colour gradually returning to his cheek. At last he looked up at Esmè with eyes that were calm, and even solemn. And as she met his gaze, the scene by the ruin flashed into her mind, and with it all the emotions—so strange, and yet so sweet—of that strange meeting; and she seemed to

know, before they were spoken, the very words that he now would speak, and the very tones in which they would be uttered. The intervening time faded away, and his words seemed to her the immediate continuation of his last sentence spoken many days ago. They came back to her like the phrases of a well-known song which had been interrupted for a moment in the singing, and now went on, in a foreseen sequence, to a conclusion which she seemed to know by heart. Cosmo did not immediately speak, but held her with his rapt eyes, so that she could not break the spell by word or movement — yielding herself to it as to the force of a mighty stream which glides, calm but irresistible, to the inevitable ocean.

At last he spoke. All the deep music had come back to his voice, and all its firmness, save when, now and then, it died in a pathetic cadence, or thrilled for an instant, following, with sensitive inflections, the tumult or pathos of his thoughts.

"I told you," he said, as if to him also it seemed that their last interview had been only for a moment suspended,—"I told you that I would seek distinction, and the social advantage which it gives; I said that I would seek it, not

for the mere sake of that advantage — which would be a paltry ambition—but as a means to an end; I told you that if I failed to reach that end, my life would be paralysed. You remember that I said all this?" Esmè's lips parted, but no sound came from them. Cosmo continued—"A few terrible moments, here, in this wood, have shown to me, not how true these words were, but how poorly they expressed the truth. Language cannot tell the measure of what is immeasurable even by thought—and these poor words tried to express the measure of a devotion which has not any limit at all."

Cosmo paused for a little: thus far he had spoken, as if strongly controlling himself; but when he resumed, his words came forth with far more fervid utterance, as though the energy of his emotion had swept away some barrier by which he had sought to restrain it.

"But I will not speak in enigmas. I feel that I now stand on the threshold of my fate, having come to this, through many conflicts and confusions. I have tried to listen, all my life, to the voice of duty; but at last that oracle has failed me, and now it is dumb. I have listened to the voice of prudence, but I cannot hear its words now; they are drowned in an

overwhelming music, and with them all the whispers of my own unworthiness. That music has filled all my life, till it has become my life; and as I breathe the breath of life, I cannot choose but utter it. You are its key-note, and its theme is the love which I now offer you."

He ceased, but Esmè spoke not a word. Lights and shadows of colour and expression passed in swift changes over her beautiful face, and her breath came faster, as Cosmo's glowing utterances rushed on to their climax; but she did not turn away. Only when his last words were spoken, a dewy lustre came into her eyes, and the strength of her emotion was confessed in one long tremulous inspiration. Cosmo continued—

"I offer you my love and I offer you my life: the one has no bounds, the other is little; but if you take the first, you will help me to make the second better and greater." He took her unresisting hand and added, "Esmè, dearest Esmè! that is my offering; will you take it, and trust me to make it not worthy—for that is impossible—but less unworthy of you, which, God helping me, I will try to do?" He gazed at her, as though his life depended on her

answer; but she did not speak. "Tell me! tell me!" he cried; "do not keep me in this cruel suspense. Has my dream been too wild —the dream which has haunted me, day and night, since first I saw you?" But still she was silent. "Alas!" cried Cosmo, "you cannot love me. I am lost!"

Then Esmè's eyes drooped, and she murmured at last, "Nay, if my poor love can save you, you are not lost."

"Oh Esmè! Esmè! I left the paradise of dreams to meet my fate; I meet the angel of my life, and find a paradise transcending dreams."

. . . . .

"For ever?"

"Yes! for ever and for ever!"

. . . . .

Linked hand in hand, eloquent with the wordless eloquence of happy souls—it was thus that these lovers, of knightly purity and true guileless maidenhood, meetly plighted troth. Care stood aloof, and the hard world: all their world was here, here in the quiet glen where, suddenly, the stillness seemed to deepen into a more golden silence, and the sunbeams seemed to flow through the voiceless quivering of the

leaves, in streams of tenderer light: here, where from love's presence-chamber, Nature hushed back the world's untoward cares, with all rude sound and movement; so that the very breath of their own last utterance seemed to hang fondly in the air about them, as its music lingered in their hearts—"For ever?" "Yes! for ever!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Alas that such rare moments should fly so fleetly! Soon "the voices of without" invaded their sanctuary. Growing from faint and distant echoes, the clamour of the hunt rolled upward from the valley; and as it swelled upon their ears, the ethereal walls which fenced them from the grosser earth dissolved, and cares and doubts and tremors entered in.

Cosmo was the first to break a long silence.

"We shall now have but a short time together," he said; "and alas! dearest, we must face what really lies before us. Even from the midst of my great happiness, anxious doubts rise. To your love I do not seem unworthy; but your father—how will *he* receive me, as his daughter's suitor?"

After a short silence, Esmè replied, "There can be no reserve between us now; and I fear we must not expect him to be very favourable

at first. But he will soon be reconciled, when he knows you better—and even for my sake, I know he will."

"I suspect he has a very strong dislike to me."

"Do not say that. He has his prejudices, but they would not influence him in such serious matters. He is too just for that; and when he knows you better, he will both like and admire you. Every one must; who could help it?"

Cosmo smiled at her sweet enthusiasm, and said—

"If it were only his personal dislike, he might, perhaps, get over that; but I fear that he will find a more serious objection in my birth."

Again Esmè paused for a little, and said—

"No, that would not be just; and I have never found papa unjust in large matters. That would not be held an objection in society in general, and why should there be an exception in my case?"

"Ah, my beloved! you are an exception to all the world. No one is worthy of you: and be sure that your father will not look lightly on the defects of any one who pretends to such a

prize. It is natural and reasonable that he should not."

"But if I see no defects, and the world would see none, papa will not be so unjust as to insist upon them. I know he will not. You cannot know how good and tender he has been to me. Do not look so anxious. All that we shall require is a little patience. And you must remember, dear, that he is very old, and has infirmities, as we all have, and that his temper is quick, and that he often says things in an exaggerated way which he only half means. You will remember this, and be forbearing with him, if he is harsh and unpleasant; will you not, dearest, for my sake?"

"Can you doubt it?"

"I know that it may be very, very trying; but if you will only bear it quietly for a little, I think that all will be well. I am certain that it will."

"When shall I speak to Lord Germistoune? It will scarcely be possible to-day, I suppose?"

"Oh, pray let me speak to him first."

"My darling, that is impossible! Consider the position it would place me in. It would look so unmanly. It would increase all his prejudices, and I do think it would justify them."

"I know you must be right; but I have never had any concealments from my father, and I think he might expect to hear of this first of all from me."

"Believe me, that I *am* right here; and, besides, your concealment shall be of the shortest duration. I shall go to-morrow to the castle and see Lord Germistoune. It is Sunday, by the by, but I shall walk over after church. I suppose I may?"

"Oh, please, please do! And now, dear, look happier, and be confident, like me. Is it likely or reasonable that all should not go well?"

"Happier, my own!" he cried, "how could I be happier? And, with you to win, what are obstacles? Who would not be confident, even if all reason and probability were against him?"

Five minutes more of bliss, during which the din of the beaters rose to its loudest climax, and then died away, close beside the lovers, in isolated cries of the zealous who beat to the last bush. Then the keeper, whose duty it was to recall the sportsmen from their posts, made his appearance, and informed them that all was over, and in another minute they found themselves approaching the main body of the party, who were waiting in the open.

The circumstances which caused Esmè's presence there, agitating though they had been, had passed from the minds of the lovers, and the peculiarity of their situation only occurred to them as they met the looks of surprise and inquiry which greeted their arrival. Fortunately their actual arrival was not observed by Lord Germistoune, who was talking to some one, and looking another way; but, turning presently, and finding that Esmè had joined the party, he gave an exclamation of astonishment and displeasure.

"How now! what escapade is this?" he cried. "How do you find yourself here, Esmè? How do you presume to disregard my rules?"

"By a pure accident, papa. I ventured to return by this glen, because I thought it had been beaten in the first drive, and that I could do no harm; and I suddenly found myself among the guns, and was obliged to remain in shelter until now. That is the explanation of the mystery."

"Mystery! You ought never to be in the woods at all when there is any kind of shooting going on. I have told you so a hundred times; it is most dangerous: and how, pray, could you tell that your shelter was a safe one?"

Here Cosmo stepped forward and replied for her.

"Fortunately," he said, "Miss Douglas came past my post, and, as she was evidently in a dangerous position, I persuaded her to go no further."

"And she remained with you, on your post, during the drive?"

"I had no alternative but to beg that she would do so. Knowing the danger as I did, I took the responsibility of even insisting that she should remain."

"You exercised a wise discretion, sir, and I thank you. As for you, Esmè, you see what your reckless disregard of my wishes has brought about. You have incurred risk; you have probably interfered with the success of the drive; you have undoubtedly destroyed Mr Glencairn's sport, and put him to grave inconvenience. You owe him an apology. Your conduct has been distinctly and altogether unpardonable."

The blood flushed in Cosmo's face, and he seemed about to speak, but a little imploring glance from her gentle eyes silenced him; and as she was far too well used to such ebullitions to make any reply, the storm soon growled itself out.

When all were mustered, the party started for the luncheon rendezvous. The Marquis, however, retaining Tom Wyedale (now appeased) as his interpreter, lingered behind to covenant with Innes for the clandestine recovery of the stag's head from the "perdition" to which the old lord's peevish temper had consigned it—an arrangement which was concluded, for the modest consideration of five pounds, to the great glee of the noble sportsman.

"De l'argent! de l'argent! de l'argent!" he cried. "Violà la vraie chanson nationale de l'Angleterre. N'importe! J'ai racheté ma renommée à bon marché."

"Comment, mon cher Marquis! votre *renommée?*"

"Mais oui! décidément. La bête fauve est à moi. Je l'ai tuée."

"Sa tête est à vous, sa mort pourtant est à mon fusil."

"Oh! là! là! qu'il s'obstine ce cher Torm! J'ai abbatu cette diablesse de bête fauve—je l'ai abimée. Tout le monde en était témoin."

"Enfin nous sommes d'accord; il n'en reste que quelques lambeaux."

"Bien?"

"Bien nous sommes d'accord."

The Marquis's susceptibilities being thus tranquillised, he strode proudly forward, decorated with various trophies of the chase—among which, in striking evidence of the versatility of his rifle, the dead body of an owl and the head of a hare hung from his girdle.

They found all the ladies awaiting their return, and the luncheon duly spread. Esmè's non-appearance had caused considerable speculation; and when the history of her adventure came to be known, some bitterness against Fortune rankled in the hearts of Lady Bugles and other ladies. Why had *they* not also gone on errands of mercy, and lost their way, and been carried off captive to the *caches* of the eligible? It was very hard upon them! Mrs Ravenhall, on the other hand, when she heard the story, set herself to watch the demeanour of the lovers, and soon drew her conclusions therefrom; nor is it too much to say of this acute lady that, before luncheon was over, she was as fully possessed of their secret as though it had been formally confided to her. No one who does justice to the character of Mrs Ravenhall as a finished worldling, will suspect her of active spite, where no personal object was to be gained by it. At the same time, she could scarcely be

expected to contemplate this evolution of Love's young dream with the amiable rapture of an idyllic poet. And, indeed, it was with a certain cynical pleasure that she looked forward to the *éclaircissement*, feeling assured that Lord Germistoune's grand unsuspiciousness of Cosmo's intentions would, when they came to be confessed, heat the furnace of his wrath sevenfold.

"Another time," she thought, "he will perhaps attend to the hints of people who have eyes, and use them."

The luncheon-party was a very merry one—merrier even than that similar festival on the opening day of grouse—for the only element of gloom which *it* had contained was now eliminated. *Then*, Cosmo had been bewildered and wretched; but now, in the reaction from long suspense, in the ecstasy of new-born happiness, his habitual reserve deserted him, and he was lively and even gay. Honest Phil observed this and was of good cheer, divining what it must portend; and Esmè, who sat opposite her lover, stealing many a glance at his radiant face, said in her grateful heart, "What joy! what joy! it is I who have made him happy!"

When Lord Ribston had fed himself in seclusion, he came and sprawled by Esmè, and paid

his court to her in the courtly fashion of these times. Cosmo beheld him with serenity, even with mirth. Over the empty head of this "oiled and curled Assyrian bull," messages of heavenly import flashed to him through the air, which brightened as they passed. What was Ribston to him? Ribston, forsooth! Let him lie and sprawl there in the fool's paradise of his fruitless *prestige* and unavailing knickerbockers!

Tom and the Marquis were at the top of their bent, and many a change was rung on the *bête fauve* of unhappy memory. Tom proposed the Marquis's health in a speech which traced the history of explosive agents till it culminated in the Marquis himself, whom he characterised as "a mighty human torpedo;" and the Marquis "carried a toast" in honour of his friend "Torm," whose petty jealousy he handled with great severity, and was entering upon what he called "a categorical memorandum" of the stag incident, when Lord Germistoune, who had not yet got over the "abominable occurrence," interrupted him with great promptitude.

The gillies and beaters were regaled with an extra ration of whisky, in honour of the three stags which had fallen (not including the *bête fauve* condemned to a nameless grave); and

the pipers played and the men danced, at a discreet and feudal distance; and one or two of them were "brought up" and commanded to sing Gaelic songs, which they did with the look of condensed resignation attributed in art to St Sebastian; and, altogether, it was a good time. At last it was the hour to go home, and a procession of triumph was formed, the pipers playing in front of the ponies on which the deer were carried, the retainers following next, while "the quality" brought up the rear.

Fortunately for Cosmo and Esmè, feudal restrictions were in abeyance; fortunately, also, Lord Ribston had again fallen sulky, so that, when Lord Germistoune led off with Mrs Ravenhall, the lovers were able to join each other without hindrance, and very soon fell back, unobserved, to a comfortable distance behind the party.

"Darling! are you happy?" was the wholly superfluous question which Cosmo breathlessly uttered, as he gazed into a face bright as the summer sky.

"So happy that I think I never can have been happy before," was the satisfactory reply. But he who supposes that *that* was sufficient, knows nothing of these things; for, of course,

the question broke out again and again with fond iterations, at short intervals, on the homeward route. On one of these recurrences, Esmè replied, with sudden gloom in her face—

"Ah, no! how, how can I be happy?"

"My own love! what do you mean?"

"Something weighs upon my mind—a solemn duty which I have wickedly neglected—oh! so wickedly!"

"Tell me, dearest, tell me!" cried Cosmo, earnestly.

"I have not yet apologised to you for my intrusion this forenoon, and papa said I must. Can you forgive me for ruining your sport, and putting you to so much inconvenience?" There was but one obvious answer to this; and with similar fond queries and responses, the happy pair moved slowly through the friendly woods.

The party had descended from the hill by a road which led past the old ruin, and when Esmè and Cosmo came within sight of the bridge above it, they saw Lord Germistoune and Phil standing there. Lord Germistoune was waiting for his daughter, and Phil for his comrade; for by the bridge lay the shortest road to Finmore.

It was as well that the lovers had some little

time to compose themselves before they reached the bridge, and it was very much better that Lord Germistoune had not seen them just before they rounded a turn in the road which brought them into sight. If he had, Cosmo's interview with his lordship on the morrow might have been dispensed with, for it would scarcely have been the channel of fresh information.

"At church, to-morrow," said Esmè, "I shall tell you the best hour to find papa, in the afternoon, if you will not relent, and let me tell him what has happened myself."

"Dearest! you may be sure that, were it possible, I would relent; but, believe me, it is not possible."

"Very well, I will be obedient; and remember, dear, your vow of patience."

"I shall remember *you*, and that will be enough."

Lord Germistoune was looking rather grim when they joined him.

"I trust," he said, "there have been no more dangerous adventures?"

"No, papa, none."

"And I trust you have expressed to Captain Glencairn your regret for your unwarrantable escapade this forenoon?"

"Yes, papa," said Esmè, the fun so dancing in her eyes that she was obliged to lower them; "and he is good enough to say that I did not inconvenience him."

"Hum! Good afternoon, gentlemen! Come, Esmè."

"I should have thought," said his lordship to Esmè, as they walked home, "that you had had enough of that man's society in your *tête-à-tête* of the morning, without repeating the experience. Do you really find him at all reasonably pleasant? Has he anything to say for himself?"

Again it was well that Lord Germistoune, with his head high in air, did not observe the look of entire confusion which covered his daughter's face, as she answered at random—

"I do not find him at all silent. He is shy, perhaps; but shy people are not always disagreeable; at least, I suppose not. Are they, do you think?"

"I don't suppose they are; but I know they always bore me," said his lordship, who did not notice the slight incoherence of his daughter's words and manner.

And so the subject dropped, leaving, however, in Esmè's candid mind, the first pain which love

had brought her. Her lover's first injunction had led to her first concealment from her father. Yet she did not blame Cosmo. Far from it; he was on a pinnacle which towered above the clouds of error, and his injunction could not but be right. For the moment, however, its results were distressing. But she whispered to herself that a few hours would set everything to rights, and then concealment and all evils would be at an end; and thus the gentle soul took comfort in roseate dreams.

CHAPTER XL.

Cosmo and Phil had scarcely cleared the bridge when they heard the sound of rapid steps pursuing them, and, turning, saw old Maggie, who had been lurking about in the woods above, not venturing to face Lord Germistoune, who had recently given her to understand, and pretty forcibly, that she was in disgrace, and that her letters of marque, as against the tourists, were in danger of being withdrawn.

"Guid e'en! guid e'en! braw gentles!" she cried, running up to them, and panting for breath. "I'm sweert to forgather wi' his lordship eenoo, sae I bude to hide a wee. Hoots! 'Jowk and let the jaw gae by,' ye ken. Eh, sir!" (earnestly addressing Cosmo), "but ye maun be the prood, prood gentleman this nicht! I wuss'd ye weel afore, and I wuss ye joy noo. Ye've gotten the wale o' the warld; for she's the wale o't, and wha but she?

'The pride o' a' the parochin
Is bonny Bessie Lee.'"

"What are you talking about, Maggie?" said Cosmo, with a crimson face.

"Eh! hard ye e'er the like o' that?

'Oh, but we're sly, sly!
Oh, but we're sly an' sleekit!'

Div *I* no ken? did *I* no see ye wi' my ain twa een comin' doon the shaw? Did *I* no see ye——?"

Here Maggie went through a highly suggestive pantomime, which assured Cosmo that some portion at least of their journey through the woods had been supervised.

"Hoots, my bonny gentleman," continued Maggie, "ne'er look sae blate.

'Gin a body meet a body
Comin' thro' the rye,
Gin a body——'

Aweel, aweel! fient haet sall the world be wiser for auld Maggie. But aiblins ye'll hae somethin' for her the nicht—for luck, like?"

"Here, Maggie," said Cosmo, putting into her hand a largesse, the like of which she had never seen before, "and now 'good night;' and please don't come with us any further."

The old woman stared at the piece of gold, in a state of awe which silenced her, and she let them go in peace, only recovering herself in time to shout after them thanks and blessings, adding, with great emphasis, "I'll no tell YON!"

"What's '*yon*,' Cosmo?" said Phil, laughing, but he was, of course, already the third participant in the lovers' tender secret.

Far into the night sat the two friends, discussing the attitude and general tactics which Cosmo should adopt at his impending interview with Lord Germistoune, as well as the probabilities, adverse or favourable, of his lordship's conduct under the circumstances. As the splendid glow of the day's excitement abated, the lover could not but acknowledge to himself that the ordeal which he had to go through on the morrow was not only formidable in itself, but that its results promised to be formidable.

"Nonsense!" cried Phil the sanguine, in answer to this oft-asserted conviction; "he's not half so formidable as you make him out to be. And why should he object to you, when she has made up her mind, and when her happiness is at stake? He is devoted to his daughter, you say?".

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"There is no doubt of that."

"Then, of course, he can't object. He might prefer a swell, with a title and all that, of course; but we're not living in the middle ages. He can't sacrifice his daughter's happiness without a common-sense reason, and there's nothing of that sort at his disposal."

"I fear he will find reasons which will satisfy *him*, whether they satisfy common-sense or not."

"Oh, you're unjust to the old gentleman."

"I wish I could believe it."

"Depend upon it, you are. I know exactly what he will say," said Phil, with an air of superior sagacity, "exactly as if I heard him saying it. He will say that it is very sudden. So it is, you know. And he will say that his daughter does not know enough of you—which, of course, is not true. Also, that he had higher views for her—which, of course, *is* true. But if you manage him properly, he will agree to a deferred engagement. That is to say, no engagement for the present, and no communication to take place between you for, perhaps, a year; after which time, if she is still in the same mind, he will agree to give his consent —for his daughter's sake. I think any fellow

with an eye, and who knows things, could see that *that* will be his line, at the very worst."

"It certainly sounds reasonable."

"Well, it does; a little hard, perhaps, but not unreasonable under the circumstances."

In such dialogues, and in ebbs and flows of despondency and confidence, the evening passed.

At church next day the two friends took care to place themselves in a position more favourable than on the previous Sunday for observing the Dunerlacht pew; and when its occupants entered, Cosmo found that his point of view commanded Esmè in the most satisfactory manner. There were a good many absentees from the castle party — Mrs Ravenhall, of course, and her brother Tom among them; but when Cosmo saw the procession close without the august form of Lord Germistoune, he was struck with a sudden pang of apprehension. Was his lordship's absence in any way connected with what had occurred? Had he discovered it by some evil chance? and was his wrath so great as to prevent his waiting on the ministrations of the Rev. Donald M'Rorie, which his devotion to the principle of church establishment and a gift of facile slumber enabled him to endure every Sunday without

fail? A flash of sunshine from Esmè's happy eyes soon reassured him on this head, and he sat in bliss through the long diet; and although Mr M'Rorie's discourse turned mainly on the personal habits of Nebuchadnezzar, Cosmo felt that he had seldom been more pleasantly edified.

"Papa is unwell this morning," said Esmè, lingering behind her party, when they left the church, "and I fear we must endure another day of suspense. He is really very cross and impracticable; and I am sure it will be better not to make our confession to-day. To-morrow he will be better, and—all will be well."

"Then we must have patience till to-morrow; but may I not go over and see you, this afternoon?"

"It will be more prudent not to come. Besides, all the others would be there, and it would be too tantalising to see you, and not have you, *all* to myself; and I am sure I could not act well enough. Some sharp eyes would read our secret. Mrs Ravenhall threw out some hints last night, which for a moment made me think that she knew it, though, of course, that was impossible."

"But could you not meet me alone out of doors?"

"Oh, Cosmo! would that be right?"

"Right, darling! have you not given yourself to me for ever?"

Esmè hesitated for a moment, and then said, "Yes, dearest; and you must know better than I what is right; so I will go, if it is possible. If you can be at the ruin a little after three o'clock, I will try to meet you there."

And here the impatient tossing of Lady Bugles's plumes warned Esmè to join the party in the carriage.

"It would appear," said her ladyship, meaningly, "that Mr Glencairn has found his tongue all of a sudden. I wonder how the miracle has been effected!"

"I wonder!" echoed Esmè, demurely.

Cosmo reached the place of tryst before the appointed hour. How transfigured all the scene appeared to be! And the sound of the waterfall — what a different meaning came forth from it to-day! It was no longer the voice of strife and struggle; it was a diapason of triumph and delight. And the passion of the waters down below was ecstasy; and in the aspect of the grey ruin and of the ancient trees there was no longer any dolour or tragedy.

Across the tumult of diamond spray, from crag to crag, a foam-bow hung its serene iridescence; and as Cosmo, musing, gazed upon it, a light touch fell upon his arm, and in his ear thrilled the low music of Esmè's voice—

"How beautiful! oh, how beautiful! Who could desire a fairer omen?"

Lord Germistoune's indisposition had chanced well for the lovers, for it gave them these golden hours of converse—destined to remain as joys for ever in their memories. In that unrestrained communion, the innermost inner life of each disclosed itself at last to the other; and at each new revelation, the bands of love were drawn ever closer and more close. Needless to recount how the history of their love was traced, from its dawn to this, its noontide splendour—traced over and over again, only to gain fresh interest at each repetition. And then their plans, their hopes, their aspirations!—the ideal life they would lead together, the greatness to be achieved by Cosmo, the inspiration to be lent by Esmè, the good to be done by both, living together in righteousness! And, oh, the delight of Esmè to hear that, for her sake, Cosmo had cast aside his fastidious hesitations, and declared for a career where his light would no longer flicker under a

bushel, but blaze abroad for the illumination of the world!

"I thought," she said, "that the happiness of making you happy could not be added to; but, when I think of helping to make you great also —oh! dear Cosmo, what have I done to deserve such joy?"

Oh! beautiful dreams of pure and noble souls! the pity of it that, so often, they should be but dreams!

Too swiftly passed these blessed hours, and at last, filled for the moment with hope and faith in what the morrow would bring forth, the lovers parted.

It was very late, and Esmè, though she made all haste, entered the drawing-room last, except her father, of all the dinner-party.

"Ah! Miss Douglas," cried Lord Ribston, "you must have had fern-seed for luncheon to-day, for you have been invisible all the afternoon, though I sought you with bitter tears. I suppose it was the old story. Another old harridan taken ill, and in want of stimulants. Now, tell me, am I not right?"

"No, Lord Ribston, you are not right."

"An old man, then?"

"You are wrong again."

"What a catechism you are, Lord Ribston, and what a narrow range you allow to Miss Douglas's errands of love and mercy!" said Mrs Ravenhall, regarding Esmè with a look of malicious fun which brought the colour to her cheek, and convinced her that, somehow or other, Mrs Ravenhall *did* know "all about it."

CHAPTER XLI.

THE next forenoon, as Cosmo was approaching the castle, he met Esmè, who was waiting to give him a last word of love and encouragement before he went to the tribunal. The crisis was an anxious one, and, face to face with it now, she perhaps saw all its hazards, with very clear perceptions, for the first time. Nevertheless, when she saw the gravity of Cosmo's face, she summoned all the brightness she could command into her own, and assumed a tone of hope and confidence for once not quite sincere.

"Papa is very well this morning," she said, "and in his best mood; and if you will remember patience, dear Cosmo, all *must* be well."

"I shall remember *you*, my beloved."

"You must tell him of your political prospects,—that will please him; but politics are delicate ground with him, as you know already."

"And what shall I say about you, darling? You know that I am, also, your ambassador."

"You will tell him the truth."

"And that is?"

"That I love you."

"My angel!"

"And that I never, never can change. But I don't think papa will expect me to change; so I am sure he will consent."

"Where shall I find you when I leave Lord Germistoune?"

"I shall wait for you on the path leading to the Fall. Now, dearest, we must part. Remember that all my heart goes with you."

Cosmo then left her and went on to the house, where he rang the bell, and asked for Lord Germistoune, with the best air of unconcern he could assume.

It was not a canonical hour of visitation, and it was the hour consecrated by Lord Germistoune to business; and so, though the servant admitted that his master was at home, he implied that there might be some difficulty about an audience.

"I have come," said Cosmo, who was resolved that there should be no further postponements, "on most important business, and I *must* see his lordship."

"I'll tell his lordship, sir."

"Quite unnecessary. Please show me to his room at once."

And, impressed by his tone of decision, the man obeyed. Lord Germistoune was in his business-room, and seated at his business-table, which was covered with all the paraphernalia of business, arranged with formal precision. The expression of his countenance bore the impress of his surroundings, and was one of grave absorption in weighty matters. And, indeed, no ordinary concern occupied the noble lord to-day. He rose, and with formal politeness, invited Cosmo to seat himself.

"I hope," said the latter, "that you are better to-day?"

"I really don't know whether I am better or not. I cannot think of my ailments. This accursed circumstance gives me no leisure, you may well believe, to think of anything else. This accursed circumstance!" he repeated, slapping the table for emphasis, and staring steadily at his visitor.

Cosmo's heart sank. Some bird of the air, then, had carried the story of his love to the angry old man, and this was his verdict — it was "an accursed circumstance."

"What have *you* got to say about it?" continued Lord Germistoune.

Cosmo's programme had presupposed such a very different introduction to the subject, that he was fairly taken aback, and could only say, after a little delay, "I should like to hear your own calm and deliberate opinion, Lord Germistoune."

"You shall have it. The last sentence I had written contains it; and here it is: 'Lord Germistoune is at a loss which most to marvel at, —the astounding audacity of the step, or the monstrous imbecility which could hope for its success.' There! that is Lord Germistoune's calm and deliberate opinion."

"I deeply regret to hear it," said Cosmo; "but I trust it is not final."

"Regret! Final! Do you mean to say that you sympathise with their villany?"

"Villany, Lord Germistoune?—*their* villany? I must misunderstand you. I don't know to what you allude."

"Why, you know they've struck, don't you?"

"Who have struck?" cried Cosmo, in deep bewilderment. But now there was an explanation. The post had just brought the news that five hundred miners on his lordship's Welsh

property had had the hardihood to go out on strike. The question was between the Glencairn Company, which leased the mineral field, and the men; but Lord Germistoune was not the man to let any groundlings on *his* estate assert themselves in such a monstrous fashion, without a fulmination on his part, and all the less so that his own pecuniary interests, as a shareholder in the Company, were directly affected. He was now, therefore, in the act of penning an instrument suitable to the occasion; and it was the last sentence of this which he had just read. With his mind full of the Glencairn Company, he at once connected Cosmo's visit with the business of the moment, and so had expressed neither the surprise nor the disapprobation which his unauthorised intrusion might otherwise have produced.

"And so you know nothing about all this?" cried Lord Germistoune, when the explanation had been made.

"No, nothing whatever; and I must tell you that I have no personal share or interest in the Company."

"I presumed, of course, that your visit bore on this scandalous affair. As I appear to have been mistaken, you will forgive me for asking to

what I may attribute it. These are my business hours. In point of fact, it is a standing rule that I don't receive before luncheon; and to-day, as you see, I am especially occupied."

"I am distressed to put you to inconvenience," said Cosmo; "but my reason for calling upon you is a most urgent one. When you know its nature, I think you will not be surprised that I have ventured to intrude, even at this hour."

"Hum!"

"*That*, at least, you will consider natural."

"Hum!"

"Whatever your other sentiments may be."

"Yes?"

"Yes."

There was a pause, during which Cosmo found that his prearranged plan of attack had entirely evaporated, as such plans usually do. Lord Germistoune was not in the mood to give him much time to reconstruct it, and he soon said—

"The nature of your business is——?"

"Is personal, and of extreme delicacy."

"Personal to yourself, or to whom?"

"To myself, and—and others; indeed it concerns *you* very nearly."

"Perhaps you will kindly explain it—categorically. Ahem!"

"If you will kindly give me your attention for a few moments, and forgive the egotism of my remarks, which will be unavoidable, I shall endeavour to do so. You do not know much of me, Lord Germistoune, but I think you know, in a general way, who I am. From your remarks just now, in talking of this trade dispute, I infer that you are aware that I am the son of Mr Archibald Glencairn, and that you are, more or less, acquainted with him?"

Lord Germistoune assented by a gesture, and Cosmo continued—

"I am not, as I have said, connected with his business, nor, indeed, with any business. I have inherited, from another source, a fortune which, even nowadays, is called considerable, and which enables me to be my own master. I have enjoyed many advantages of education, though I do not pretend to have profited by them as I ought to have done. Since leaving the army I have travelled a great deal, and devoted myself, with some energy, to various branches of study. I have now an early prospect of entering Parliament, and it is my intention to pursue a political career. That is a brief *résumé* of my past history and future prospects."

Lord Germistoune was, of course, not a little

puzzled by all this, and his irritation was kept in check by his bewilderment; but when Cosmo came to a pause, he said, hastily—

"You make this statement with some purpose, of course; may I ask what it is?"

Cosmo continued—

"There is one omission which I have made, and which, in perfect candour, I must supply, and it is this—that, though I descend, through my mother, from a good family, of even high position, my birth, on the father's side, is obscure. Our history does not go beyond three generations, and it then disappears in a strong suspicion of illegitimacy. I have now stated, as honestly as I can, my exact position in life."

"You will allow me to say, Mr Glencairn, that this confidence is unsought, and, let me add, quite unnecessary. If I have been content to admit you to my house without question, you, I think, may be satisfied to accept the privilege, without obtruding unasked-for explanations. I admit that discussions have taken place in the circle here, as to your antecedents. You have probably become aware of this fact, and this, no doubt, is the cause of your visit and your explanation. But, when I decide to admit a gentleman to my house, you may de-

pend upon it that I know what I am about. I am perfectly able to regulate the exact amount of intimacy to which any one ought to be admitted. In short, I am able to take care of myself. If I had thought it necessary, I would have asked you for certain explanations; as it was unnecessary, I have refrained; and when I have added—which I think I am bound to add—that your desire to avoid even the suspicion of false pretences, is not discreditable to you, all has been said which requires to be said. Now I fear I must remind you that there are strong prior claims on my time this morning."

His lordship took up the thunderbolt which he had been concocting for the Welsh miners, and added—

"It is necessary that these miscreants should be dealt with, without the delay of a single post. I must therefore, I fear, wish you good morning."

He was moving towards the bell, when Cosmo interrupted him.

"I must beg you, my lord," he said, "to bear with me a little longer. You have misinterpreted the object of my visit. I have not even hinted at it, as yet."

Lord Germistoune turned impatiently, and cried—

"I am at a loss to conceive with what other object you should think it necessary to favour me with your biographical sketch. I do not wish to be discourteous, but I must say that you can scarcely suppose that it has any special interest for me!"

"Indeed it has, Lord Germistoune."

"Now! now! now!——"

"In connection with what I am about to say."

Lord Germistoune threw himself impatiently into his chair, and tossed his papers about with an angry hand. "Pray go on, sir," he said —"pray go on, and be as brief, I beg, as is possible!"

"I have told you," said Cosmo, "about myself, as I was bound in honour, as a gentleman, to do—keeping back nothing that could tell against me, and having but little, I fear, to say in my own favour. I have done this, Lord Germistoune, that you may know who *exactly* is the man who ventures to come before you, honestly, and openly, at least, if not hopefully, as a suitor——"

"A suitor, sir? For what? or whom?" cried Lord Germistoune.

"For your daughter's hand."

The old lord fell back in his chair, his hair seemed literally to stand on end ; his face grew white and then livid, and his eyes stared fixedly, as though Cosmo were some apparition from the unseen world. All power of speech seemed to forsake him.

Cosmo went on—

"This takes you by surprise, Lord Germistoune, and I can see that the surprise is not a pleasant one, and I can understand why this should be so. I am painfully aware of my unworthiness of Miss Douglas. I know to what a different match she is, in every way, entitled. I was so convinced of this, that, when I found her influence threatening to become irresistible, I withdrew myself from it. But I found that it was too late ; my destiny was already fixed and irrevocable. I then resolved—you may think the resolution desperate, and even absurd—to attempt, with whatever ability I may possess, to arrive at such personal distinction as might help to bridge the gulf which separates us socially. I took measures to commence the career I have mentioned already, and I am going to pursue it with all my might. But I have no illusions as to my abilities. I know that I may well fail, and that even if I reach

success, it must be worked for and waited for patiently. Believe me that I am prepared to work hard, and to wait patiently. In the meantime, alas! love cannot wait; it will not be controlled by prudence, and it speaks."

"It *dares* to speak," hissed Lord Germistoune, without altering his look or attitude.

"Yes, it dares to speak, as a man will dare do anything for life; and it dares to ask you to give me a little hope—even in the far future. It dares to ask this, not for the sake of *my* happiness, which can be nothing to you, but for hers, which to you must be all-important."

Lord Germistoune sprang up suddenly from his lethargy, and cried, with recovered voice, "*Her* happiness? Your presumption does not carry you the length of pretending to answer for *that?*"

"It is no longer mere pretence, nor is it presumption."

"What do you mean, sir, in the name of ten thousand devils?"

"I mean that, unworthy though I be, I am entitled to answer for her, unreservedly."

"You do not dare to tell me that you have spoken to my daughter?"

"Yes, Lord Germistoune, I have spoken to

her, and she will tell you herself, as she has told me, that she loves me, and will never change."

Lord Germistoune was dumb for a moment, and then gasped out, as though choking with passion, "And you believe this?"

"Yes, as firmly as if I had the word of an angel for it. Ah, Lord Germistoune! her words are not lightly spoken. She will never change. Think of this and her happiness, and believe that, if ever there was devotion in man's nature, it is in mine for her; and that what power is in me to make me worthier of her, I will use it with all my strength, and through all my life. I urge——"

"Silence, sir!" cried Lord Germistoune, starting to his feet. "I have never been easily astonished. I shall never be astounded again. There is the door, sir; take yourself out of it as quickly as may be, and never presume to address me or my daughter again!"

"You give me no reason, Lord Germistoune."

"Reason, sir? even your crazy self-assurance can scarcely require to be told that a lady with the blood of kings in her veins, and who will be a peeress in her own right, is, in my opinion, beyond the contamination which you imagine for her. Go, sir! go, I say!"

"Contamination!" cried Cosmo, starting forward, with the fire flashing from his eyes; "no man shall dare——" then he recollected himself, paused, and said, "I promised to be patient, and I will at least avoid the contamination of disloyalty to her."

CHAPTER XLII.

Hardly knowing what he did, Cosmo rushed from the house and strode with vehement steps up through the woods. The interview had been protracted by frequent long pauses, and Esmè, walking on in anxious meditation, had reached the spot where, yesterday, the lovers parted in the glow of happiness and hope. When Cosmo saw her in the distance, she was standing, as he had been standing, and gazing at the Fall which had hung out for them its bow of promise, so soon, alas! to prove illusory. At sight of her, all her gentle loving ways, her sweet encouragements, her bright auguries, her happiness, her hopes, her love, and her pride in it; all these things rushed into his mind, confused and almost maddened as it was. The blow he had received had so stunned him, that he had not yet realised his own anguish, and the sight of her first brought it home to him in a burst of

bitterest emotion. But it was of her, and for her, that he thought. To tell her the fatal truth, to tell her that their dream was dissolved, to see her radiant face grow dark, to hear the happy music die from her sweet voice—oh the misery, the misery of this! how could he endure it? He stopped irresolute, striving to control his feelings and nerve himself, for her sake. Suddenly, she turned and saw him, and forthwith ran to meet him, with the simple eagerness of her guileless nature. As she drew near and saw the sadness of his face, she read in it their fate; and she, too, feeling first for her lover's grief, stretched out her arms to him and cried, in accents of infinite tenderness, "Oh my beloved! oh my poor darling! it is I who have brought you to this!"

He took her by the hand and led her back, without a word, to the spot which, for them, had been the scene of so many emotions; nor did he speak until they had been, for a long time, seated side by side, gazing, in sad silence, on the waters which looked so black and wild to-day. At last he roused himself and told her what had passed, softening, as best he might, the harsher details of the interview.

"Did papa hold out no hope? none at all?"

said Esmè, with a pathetic tremble in her voice, and looking at him through a mist of tears which began to escape over her pale cheeks.

"Alas! no, dearest—I must not deceive you —not a hope."

"Oh my darling! I cannot bear it! I cannot bear it! My heart will break;" and she burst into an agony of weeping.

Cosmo held her in his strong arms, and soothed her with low-murmured words of fondness; and as a child in grief clings to its comforter, so did she cling to him, sobbing out the passion of her sorrow on her lover's breast. And in that pure embrace and in that moment of bitterness, the love of the man — ever tenderest when it protects,—and of the woman— ever fondest when it leans upon the strong,— were drawn together in bonds that must surely prove indissoluble. Gradually the relief of tears worked its charm; slowly her sobs died away, and she lay quiet in the resting-place she was so soon to lose. Cosmo bent down and gently kissed her, and she raised herself at last, calm, and with the wraith of a piteous smile on her poor, trembling lips. "We said 'for ever,' dearest," she murmured; "and it is 'for ever' still, is it not?"

"For ever and for ever," said Cosmo, fervently.

"I cannot disobey papa, you know," she went on; "and if he will keep us separate, we must be separate, but our hearts can never be separate; can they, dear?"

"Never!"

"And he can never make me love any one else—*that* is impossible;—and you will never love any one else. I feel so sure, oh, so sure of that!—and I will come here every day, and remember all your words and think of you, so that I shall seem to hear your dear voice speaking them; and everything will remind me of you, so that I shall almost seem to see you. Oh, poor darling! you will not have this comfort. But promise me that you will come here, every day, in your thoughts—thinking of all the things here that we have looked at together—thinking of them with all your might, and saying to yourself, 'Esmè is looking at them now, and thinking of me, and loving me, with all her heart.' Then we shall really almost meet, shall we not? Promise me this, darling Cosmo."

"Promise, my own! wherever you are, my thoughts and my heart shall be with you, night and day—while I live."

"And oh, dear Cosmo! something seems to tell me now—even now, when all is so dark—that we need not despair. Papa will surely relent when he is convinced that I can never change; and you are so good and so noble, and you will be so great, if you will only persevere and not despond, that he will be forced to relent. Then, dear, promise me that you will not despair, but that you will go on in your work, and work with all your might. Say to yourself that I am standing beside you, trying to help you with my prayers and my love; for I shall hear of you, if I cannot see you, and in all your troubles and in all your triumphs, my heart shall be with you. I know that you will do this, will you not?"

"I will," said Cosmo, but his voice failed him for further utterance.

"And I know," continued Esmè, "that whatever you do, you will do it not for yourself only, nor even for my sake only, but far more, for the sake of doing what is good and noble like yourself. And so I think that God will help us, if we are only patient, and trust in Him. Yes, He will help us. So I am not going to be unhappy any more, but quite cheerful; and I am sure that this 'good-bye' is only

for a very little, and that we shall meet again, not to be separated any more."

Cosmo was far more overcome by these touching words—striving as they did, so bravely and so unselfishly, to bring him comfort—than by all that had passed before, and it was only after several vain attempts to speak that he was able to say, "I promise all. I shall try to deserve God's help."

Hours had passed. They felt that the moment of parting had inexorably come; and, as they stood together in that last solemn silence which precedes a solemn separation, the sound of rapid steps was heard, and, a moment after, Mrs Ravenhall stood before them. Her air was one of haste and excitement, and she addressed Esmè at once, without in any way noticing Cosmo.

"They have been searching for you everywhere, dear Esmè, and your father is very seriously disturbed about your absence. He would have gone out and come here to look for you himself, but I persuaded him, with great difficulty, to let me come instead. I feared that in his present agitation something painful might occur, and so I came myself. Now we must not delay a moment; do come away."

"I will come, Mrs Ravenhall." Then she turned to Cosmo, and murmured in a low voice, "Good-bye," and Cosmo murmured "Good-bye," and she was turning to depart. In all that had passed, their real farewells had been already taken; they comprehended each other absolutely, and their hearts were one. But to Esmè's tender nature this cold formality was intolerable, and, regardless of Mrs Ravenhall's presence, she once more threw herself passionately on her lover's breast. "Good-bye!" she cried, "my own! my most beloved! I do not care who knows it and who sees it. I am proud of my love, and it will never die or change—never! never!"

Mrs Ravenhall looked up into the sky and down into the deeps—either from discretion, or because this was "a scene" and in contravention of her code, which placed under a ban all display of genuine human feeling. Presently Esmè stood beside her; "I am ready now, Mrs Ravenhall," she said, and in another moment the lovers were parted—Mrs Ravenhall thought, for ever.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Esmè walked by her friend's side, quietly weeping. It might have melted a very hard heart to see the tears and the sorrow of one so young and lovable. It did not touch Mrs Ravenhall's heart, however; not because it was hard, but because it was an empty shell, containing no emotional machinery. It did something else, however, which answers quite as well in society as the efflux of true sympathy; it awoke a sense of personal discomfort, which the grief of others always produced in Mrs Ravenhall, who liked to see bright faces and to hear happy voices, just as she preferred sunshine to storm and warmth to cold. This sense of personal discomfort struggling for alleviation moved her to apply to Esmè's woe such balm as is to be extracted from glozing words of spurious sympathy. In this way (having told Esmè that her father had apprised her of what had taken

place) she conjured her to be of good cheer, pointing out that it is usually darkest just before dawn, that it is a long lane which has no turning, and adducing many similar floscules of proverbial consolation. Lord Germistoune, she said, was, of course, angry just now—rather seriously angry indeed; but, if he was swift to wrath, he was quickly appeased. His fondness for her would plead with his anger. She herself had already somewhat mollified him, she hoped, by explaining that old heads can by no means be put on young shoulders, and that Esmè's good sense and filial piety would soon bring her to cheerful submission. In fine, all would soon be forgiven and forgotten, and they would, in point of fact, live happy ever after.

"No," said Esmè, quietly, "I will submit and try to be patient, and papa may forgive" ("forgive!" she repeated, indignantly), "but I can never be happy—never be really happy any more, unless papa relents. There can be no forgetfulness for *me*."

Mrs Ravenhall laughed in her sleeve. "Poor little thing!" she thought, "in a month she will have forgotten all about him. In the meantime it would be wretched work here; and his lordship's announcement, that we are

all to get our dismissal to-morrow, was perfectly welcome."

"Well, darling Esmè," she said aloud, as they reached the house, "you know that you will always have a true and loving friend in me, and what I can do to help your happiness I will always do — depend upon that. Go straight to your father, dear; do not be afraid of him. He will not be very harsh or severe, I am sure."

"I am not afraid of papa; I never have been afraid of him; and, as I have done nothing wrong, I have no fear now."

In this frame she went bravely to Lord Germistoune's room. We should be sorry to harrow our readers by describing minutely all that the poor girl suffered there. Her father felt that all his pride of ancestry, station, wealth, *prestige*, all his jealous love for his daughter — *his* only child, *his* future representative—had been outraged, insulted, sullied even, by being dragged, even in the imagination, down into a connection with this nameless nobody, whom he had always disliked, and whose presumption now simply maddened him. Shaken with the passion which all this stirred, he was, at first, violent and incoherent as a

lunatic. But Esmè kept silence, strengthening herself in her patience by the recollection of what Cosmo had borne for her sake, and leaning, in her heart, on the stay and comfort of his great love. And, since wrath which is noisy soon exhausts itself in its declamations, and since wrath which meets no resistance soon loses its impetus, and since an old man's wrath fails for lack of the energy of life, it thus soon befell that Lord Germistoune, physically exhausted by hours of concentrated excitement, became, if not more reasonable, at least somewhat calmer; and the interview closed as follows:—

"Before you leave this room, Esmè, you shall give me a solemn undertaking, absolutely and entirely to give up this man, and to think no more of him."

"I will promise you, papa, not to marry him, while you withhold your consent."

"And you will hold no communication with him?"

"None, while you forbid it."

"And you will banish him from your thoughts?"

"No, papa, I will not do that."

"What! you dare to say this to my face?"

"I cannot promise what is impossible. I have never deceived you in anything, and I never will deceive you. And I wish you to know that I never will cease to love him. Nothing can change me. I have vowed it in words, and if honour would not keep me true to my vow, my heart would."

"Don't talk this rubbish to me, about vows and hearts and lovers' eternities—I know the value of it. I'm not a girl."

"Oh, papa! papa! remember that *I* am but a girl, and do not be so hard and cruel. Remember that, if you separate me from him, and take away your own love also, I shall indeed be desolate."

With these plaintive words she laid her hand beseechingly on his arm; and the old man, in spite of himself, was touched by the forlorn aspect of the one being whom in all the world he loved. He repressed any symptom of softening, however, except that he said, in a gentler tone, "You may leave me now, Esmè; if you deserve my love you shall not lose it."

When he was left alone he muttered to himself, "Time,—time, and judicious coldness and firmness on my part—these will bring her to her senses; and then London and a groove will

do the rest. If she had been more in London this madness would not have taken her; if she had been formed by conventional women she would have been incapable of it. But it is not too late yet. No, no, not too late. London and a groove!"

Esmè did not appear either that night or the next morning. Her father made her apologies. An overwhelming headache, he said, kept her to her room; and only Mrs Ravenhall saw her to take farewell. When she crept down-stairs in the afternoon, the house was silent and empty; every guest had departed; silence within and gloom without; black skies, and moaning winds, and dreary rain-drifts marching up the glen. In this sad fashion closed those three bright weeks, and Esmè, bereft of her lover, and estranged from her father, was truly all alone.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Cosmo did not remain long in the spot where their passionate farewell had been taken. He gave one last look at the Fall, and the old castle, and the woods—intently gazing at them, as though to fix indelibly in his mind every detail of the scene where his spirit was to come and keep its daily tryst with Esmè. Then he strode rapidly away through the woods, and across the bridge, in the direction of Finmore. Other eyes had beheld the lovers' pathetic interview and their tearful parting. Perched in her eyrie, up in the ruined tower, the crazy old woman who had, more than once, intervened so inopportunely, observed it all from first to last. But she did not come down; she remained perfectly still and silent, watching the scene with a strangely solemn look in her vague face, and only muttering to herself, now and then, some

scrap of doleful song suggested by what was passing down below—

> "'Ae fond kiss, and then we sever!
> Ae fareweel, alas! for ever!'

Oh, but it's waefu'! it's waefu'! my ain heart's fit to brak."

And when the last parting took place, the poor old creature, who dearly loved Esmè, in her fitful way, fairly lifted up her voice and wept, sobbing to herself, "Oh, my bonny leddy! my bonny leddy! that's aye sae gude to me! whatfor wad they gang to break her kind heart? Oh, my bonny leddy!"

The last sound which Cosmo heard, as he passed the bridge, was her voice singing among the crags up above—

> "Had we never loved sae kindly,
> Had we never loved sae blindly,
> Never met, or never parted,
> We had ne'er been broken-hearted."

This was the sadly appropriate farewell which Dunerlacht gave him.

When he reached home, he walked into the room where Phil was sitting, and said, abruptly —"It is all over, Phil—finally, as far as Lord Germistoune can make it final. He rejected me with every sort of scorn. But, please, ask

me no questions, and say nothing more about it. I can't bear it yet. I'm going to take a long walk now; I can't remain still."

"Let me come with you, my dear fellow. It's bad to be alone with a sad heart."

"No, no; but thank you all the same. I must be quite alone. Don't wait dinner for me, or sit up, or mind me in any way. It may be midnight before I return."

Then Cosmo went away and wandered far and wide, without destination or purpose, save to wear out the spirit of unrest, which held him in its grip. He was visible no more that night; and when he appeared next day, his friend was by no means surprised to hear that he was going to leave Finmore within an hour.

"I am going," he said, "for a month of rapid movement and continual change of scene,—for a month, or a shorter time, if I recover my senses sooner. Then I shall return to fulfil my pledge to her—to work, to hope, to believe, and, I trust, at last to win her; for, while I live, I shall never despair. Stay here, Phil, as long as you please, and the longer the better. The establishment is all engaged for two months more, and it is a pity you should lose the chance of so good a moor. I shall not return, of course."

Phil wished rather to accompany his afflicted friend on his travels, but Cosmo would not hear of this; so he agreed to remain by himself at Finmore, but only for a week.

So Cosmo bade Phil farewell, and went on his way.

As he went to the station and by the road which led past the castle, he saw an open vehicle approaching him which seemed to contain three persons, and to be piled high with luggage in front. As it came up, Cosmo discovered that it conveyed Tom Wyedale and his servant, and he was for passing with a hurried salutation. But Tom would not suffer this, halting him with lusty shouts, and begging him to descend and come apart for a few minutes' conversation on urgent private affairs.

When they had got to a few paces' distance from the servants, Tom stopped, with a grave face, and said, "I've heard, my dear old boy, through my sister, of this confounded catastrophe."

"What do you mean?" cried Cosmo, angrily.

"Oh Cosmo! Cosmo! am I not your oldest friend? Don't do dignity with me, man! I know all about it, and there's no one can be

half so sorry for it as I am, except she and you. But cheer up, old fellow. It will all come right at last. I've always thought that you and she were made for each other—ever since that time down at Cadenabbia. That's paying you a compliment, I can tell you. I have not known many women who were good for much, besides herself; and she's good enough to redeem the character of the whole sex. And I say it will all come right, *because* she is so good, and would never throw a fellow over when she once liked him; I am sure of that. Still, Cosmo, I'm awfully sorry for you, awfully."

"Thanks, Tom; you're a good fellow."

"And I was thinking, Cosmo, that it might be a comfort to you, when you're down in your luck (which won't last long, I think, for his lordship is not immortal, and, fortunately, stricken in years and really getting shaky)—that it might be a comfort to you, when down in your luck, to have your old pal with you, who would do his best to cheer you up. So here I have come, with bag and baggage, to take no refusal, but force my way into Finmore. I'm leaving Dunerlacht, at any rate, so don't suppose I'm putting myself to inconvenience."

"It's really good of you, Tom," said Cosmo; "but, you see, I'm on a journey myself; indeed I'm not going back to Finmore."

"What! and you're going to leave all that grand shooting which Davidson says you've hardly touched?"

"Phil Denwick is to stay there for a week."

"A week! and one gun!"

"Oh Tom! if you like to go on there, and stay in my absence, you are most welcome. Stay till the end of the season, if you please. You will find servants and everything there, and no one knows I'm not going to return."

"My dear Cosmo, that is a very good offer and a very kind one. It is not likely that I shall be able to stay long, and it will be sad to be there in your absence, knowing the unhappy cause of it. Still, I will go there for a little. I think it will be a relief to your mind to know that the grouse are being properly shot, won't it?"

"It's well they should not be wasted. Good-bye, Tom."

"Good-bye, and good luck to you before long."

And so this fortunate scamp, amidst the disasters of his friends, rose, as usual, to the

surface; and went on, and, to the joy of old Davidson, abode at Finmore for many weeks, and made himself thoroughly comfortable, and "toozled" the "Three Kimmers" to his heart's content, and "slated" the game everywhere, as it had seldom been "slated" before.

CHAPTER XLV.

The eight months succeeding the events narrated in our last chapter, effected a good many changes in the external circumstances of Esmè and Cosmo. Lord Germistoune, accustomed to have his own way in all things, was, at first, impatient to extract from his daughter an acknowledgment of her error, and a confession that she had ceased to think of Cosmo ; and, at short intervals, recurred to the subject with the formal expression of a hope that she had "come to her senses." But Esmè, always candid and fearless, never wavered from her original declaration. For her, "change was impossible;" and although she expressed this with all gentleness, and with dutiful regret that there should be variance between her father and herself, it was with a constant firmness which gradually led the old lord to suspect that the high-handed system would not answer. At last, under the inspira-

tion of Mrs Ravenhall, whom he consulted by letter, he was persuaded to adopt a more politic method, which aimed at the reduction of obstinacy by the influence of time and silence. Exercising an amount of self-restraint, which was very irksome to him, he ceased to make any allusion to "the affair," and Cosmo's name never crossed his lips, though that "audacious miscreant" was constantly, and bitterly, in his thoughts. But this change did not greatly avail Esmè; for her father had resolved to combine with the silent, something like the solitary, system; that is to say, he would neither pay nor receive visits: and in this he persevered for some weeks, with the results on his irritable temper which were naturally to be expected. From it poor Esmè had much to endure; and what with that, what with the blankness of life, when it is only illumined by vague and distant hopes, her lot promised to be a sad one. Indeed, when she looked out on the glorious summer of love and sympathy which was, in one sense, so near, and, in another sense, so far, the winter of her discontent was, at times, all but intolerably cold and dark and dreary. But here, again, Mrs Ravenhall intervened, strongly deprecating such a modification of the system which she had in-

duced Lord Germistoune to adopt; and here, again, his lordship was persuaded to change his tactics. He did so, as he did everything, in a violent and exaggerated way. He filled the castle with guests; he offered visits, right and left, in the district; when he had exhausted it, he shifted his quarters to Ferniehall, and kept open house there; and at all the festive gatherings which, at this time of the year, keep Scotland in a state of high carnival, he and his daughter were present, without fail. Hitherto he had affected a certain regal exclusiveness and social reserve; he had avoided, to use his own phrase, "making himself cheap;" and his change of habits naturally excited remark. Those who knew him little, solved the problem by deciding that he wished to get his daughter married; those who knew him best, thought that he was not the man to take any initiative in such a matter, expecting—as he certainly would expect—to be beset by swarms of suitors—all of the highest distinction—from among whom it would simply be his duty to select the most eligible. Those who knew him least were, however, nearer to the mark.

Hitherto he had put away from his mind, as distasteful, the idea of Esmè's marriage; he felt

that, when the swarms began to close round him, it would be time enough seriously to consider it. But this horrible affair had altered all his views, and alarmed him seriously, in more ways than one. It was true that, during his lifetime, he could prevent Esmè from marrying Cosmo; and her dutifulness was so strong that he might almost reckon on his veto holding good, when he was no longer alive to enforce it. But what if this prohibition should result in her remaining permanently single? It was this consideration which affected him, almost, if not quite, as much as Cosmo's outrageous audacity; for, with Esmè, the entail ended, the titles would be extinct, the family, in fact, at an end. Lord Germistoune had therefore revolutionised his habits for the present, with a double object. In the bustle and excitement of a gay life, Cosmo was to be forgotten by Esmè; and in the haunts of the eligible, she was to meet an appropriate magnate who, by espousing her, should save the family from extinction. Propelled, therefore, by these two motives, the old lord dragged Esmè about the country, eager to be everywhere, like a match-making mother who hungers and thirsts for the espousal of her daughters. Eager to be everywhere, yet choked with the sense of humiliation

which all this involved; and, in the extra *hauteur* of his manner and acerbity of his tone, visiting the resentment which it caused, upon all the world. If there had been any chance that his daughter would coincide in his matrimonial schemes for her, his own conduct would have neutralised them. For, now looking upon all young men as possible, and even probable, aspirants, he carried himself scowlingly towards every youth, until cause had been shown why he should do otherwise; and, even in the case of any one who, being eligible, showed a disposition to pay attention to his daughter, his lordship thought it due to himself to adopt a tone of suspicious austerity and condescension, which was meant to convey to the young man that it was only by the stretching of a point that he could be considered eligible, and that there was no sort of margin to spare. And, indeed, in deciding on the question of eligibility, he was honestly in this dilemma, that no one who was not very great was good enough; and any one who was great enough to be good enough would be apt, by superiority of title, to swamp the Germistoune honours: and that *his* family should be extinguished, by merging even in a ducal house, outraged an egotism which took cognisance of

the unborn generations of his descendants, to the end of time.

It came to pass from all this, that suitors were discouraged, and that young men in general were frightened away from Esmè, not caring to run the blockade of her father's fierce and sleepless observation. Before long, Lord Germistoune could not but see that she was not sought after, the blame of which he, of course, laid at her door alone. "She is hankering after that villain Glencairn, and so snubs every one else." This was how he explained it to himself; and the fire of his wrath burned yet the more hotly against "the villain," and reflected itself in the harsh tone which he adopted towards his daughter.

From Scotland, Lord Germistoune carried her to his seat in Wales, and there for a time mystified his neighbours by his novel ways of life; and thence, in the feverish pursuit of his objects, he took her abroad for the winter. Whatever virtue change of scene may have in obliterating misplaced attachments, he certainly gave it a fair trial,—rushing from place to place in that region of the Continent with which the pursuit of health had, before now, made him very familiar. With the exception of Monte Carlo, there was scarcely

a station on the Riviera of which he did not make trial. He liked Cannes—he had always liked it; for the people there were generally, more or less, *comme il faut*, and the climate was, as a rule, pleasant. But, after a fortnight, he found that, on this occasion, it did not suit his purpose. There was little distraction and no excitement, and the male visitors were—as they always are—octogenarian, sick, married, or beardless. In short, it was unavailable. Nice had never been to his taste, but he tried even it, and found it, as of yore, full of *rococo* English and Americans, and with a foreign element which made his aristocratic and respectable blood boil and freeze, in turns. Carried past the sunny, but sinful, heights of Monaco, Esmè had to dree the weird of a ghastly week in that stuffy *morgue* —Mentone; and another in San Remo, that fair paradise of deadly dulness; and thereafter, expiated her sins in a penitential pilgrimage which brought her, by fits and starts, through Genoa, Pisa, and Florence, to Rome. In all these places her father conducted himself with the same feverish haste and insolence—looking in, as it were, at the door of society in each—scanning its *personnel*, and then retiring with the sort of air adopted by some supercilious exquisites, of

seeing no one "good enough" to justify his continuance in such a sphere.

At Rome they fell in with Tom Wyedale, who, having "broken the bank" at Monte Carlo, had resolved not to give the bank a chance of recouping itself at his expense, and so had fallen back on the Eternal City, which, that winter, offered exceptional facilities for relieving pecuniary plethora, by means of *baccarat*.

Lord Germistoune was, by no means, cordial to Tom, and discouraged intimacy. In his eyes, Tom was no longer the light-hearted *farceur*; he was now a probable aspirant, and therefore, probably, a crafty, designing dog; in addition to which, he was the intimate ally of the man who had caused all this woe. Esmè was overjoyed to see her old friend, who, besides being the friend of Cosmo, was hearty and cheery, and a very bright relief to the gloom which surrounded her. Tom, himself, had little difficulty in comprehending the ordeal to which she was being subjected, and his kindly nature longed to give her comfort. And he did give her comfort, in the best possible way, by talking about Cosmo with the unconsciousness which he knew how to assume, and by, accidentally as it were, giving her minute intelligence about him, which cheered

her with the knowledge that her lover was true to his vow not to despond, but to hope and work. As to his love, she required no assurance on that head. It was delightful thus to talk about him again, and with one who, though apparently unconscious, was so sympathetic in his views of Cosmo; it was delightful, but her satisfaction was too obvious, and so brought its own extinction. For, when her father observed the pleasure she had in meeting Tom, his suspicions became acute, and he let his quondam *protégé* know very frankly that his society was not desired. So Tom was completely disestablished, and deeply resented the loss of many dining and other advantages, which he had counted on extracting from the "old Buffalo."

In this strange way the winter passed for Esmè—passed like an evil dream, in which her father's spasms of wild vagary and personal unkindness constituted the episodes, and the forlorn sense of separation, and the anguish of love's hopes deferred, formed the grand central trouble upon which the episodes of evil dreams are built. From all the many sources of pleasure once familiar to her, in these places of sojourn, she was now in a manner cut off. Her father dogged her like a detective, and con-

trived, by methods more galling than open words, to let her feel that she was suspected and under surveillance. The glories of nature, the beauties of art, and the delights of social intercourse, lose their charm under such conditions, and Esmè had no alleviations. It was, therefore, to her unmingled satisfaction, that an alarm of fever at Rome decided her father to return to London much earlier than he had purposed. Her lot could not be worse there than here; and she would, at all events, be near Cosmo, perhaps see him sometimes; and that, even though they must hold no communication, was much — indeed, a world of consolation. So that Lord Germistoune's varied efforts to efface, stamp out, or supplant her affection, had been all so much labour in vain. They had helped to take the colour from her cheek, and the brightness from her manner, but that was all. The old lord had a great deal more than a suspicion that this was the case; but of course there was no relenting on his part; and so, they were no sooner settled in the family mansion in town, than he set about taking measures which, under proper safeguards, should insure for Esmè every opportunity and distraction which the season, now commencing, could

supply. Foremost among these measures was, that he secured the alliance, offensive and defensive, of an eminent dowager—a kinswoman of his own. This was the Lady Octopa Hawker, a great power in society, and who, on the matrimonial war-path, first for her daughters and then for her nieces, was believed to have taken more scalps than any extant pursuer of men. Her ladyship had married off all her own near belongings; but the instincts of the conqueror were still keen within her, and she longed for new achievements. With hearty cordiality, then, she undertook the chaperonage and social supervision of Esmè, whose personal attractions and dazzling prospects promised *éclat* to Lady Octopa herself, and a sphere of operations wide enough for the ambition of a great strategist. She quite understood what Lord Germistoune wanted. There had been a foolish entanglement in the country, which still haunted the girl's fancy. Esmè's settlement was therefore more than a matter of general expediency — it was urgent. Lady Octopa quite grasped the situation. Similar "cases" had been successfully manipulated by her before now; and she assured Lord Germistoune confidently, that he might make his mind easy.

So Esmè was launched into the vortex; and, under the system of Lady Octopa, with which his lordship consented not to interfere, she had every distraction and opportunity which London affords. It could not be said that she became the fashion; she was not mobbed and gazed at from chairs, hastily climbed as posts of observation, which are among the attentions now enjoyed, in this well-bred metropolis, by ladies who chance to be the rage of the hour. Neither by the style of her beauty, nor by her manner, was she at all likely to be, in this sense, the fashion; but she soon became the object of much interest, of some real devotion, and of considerable pursuit. To this she was indifferent, since all men but one "were to her like shadows." But London was more endurable than Scotland and Italy had been, for the sway of Lady Octopa was less harassing than her father's sway—and Cosmo was in town.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Cosmo was in town; but we must go back a little, and trace the events which led to the circumstances under which he was there. When he left Scotland, seeking, in movement and rapid changes of scene, some distraction from grievous mental pain, he crossed the Channel, and, without purpose or programme, found himself presently at Marseilles; and thence, in the same haphazard way, went over to the island of Corsica. This he explored unrestingly, scaling the rugged heights of the Monte d'Oro and the Monte Rotondo, traversing the noble forests of Aitone and Vizzavona, crossing the island by the grand and unique route from Bastia to Ajaccio, and moving half round it, partly on foot, partly in the rough vehicles of that primitive land. His fare was simple, his lodging rough, his physical exertions severe; he lived alone with Nature, and amidst aspects

of Nature constantly changing but always noble; and soon, in a measure, recovering the equilibrium of thought which he was in quest of, he felt in a position to turn his face homewards, before the prescribed month had elapsed. At Marseilles he found letters awaiting him, and one from his father which induced him to continue his journey to England, with all speed. The news it contained was entirely welcome and opportune, being to the effect, that the sitting member for Puffboro had, on visiting his constituents, found it expedient to reconsider his intention of "sticking to his post,"—that he had now, in fact, taken steps to retire, and that the writ for a new election was to be issued immediately. Mr Glencairn stated that, acting upon what his son had said to him, some months before, he had gone down to the place himself, and set matters in train for Cosmo's candidature, and already done a little quiet canvassing on his behalf; but that his own personal appearance on the scene, and the issue of his address, at the earliest moment possible, were necessary.

Cosmo telegraphed that he was on his way home, and lost so little time that, before thirty-six hours had elapsed, he was in the borough.

Here awaiting him he found Mr Hopper, whom, in consideration of a good many electioneering qualities, his father had sent down to "manage" matters.

"Come at last!—and most welcome, Captain Cosmo!" cried Hopper. "And now, since there is no time to lose, perhaps you would kindly throw an eye over this, and then we can send it to the printer at once. There were one or two points we were in doubt about, so couldn't issue it before your arrival." He produced a roll of paper.

"What is that?" asked Cosmo.

"The address, Captain; your address."

"*My* address!—and you *thought* of issuing a statement of my principles, without my sanction?"

"The committee thought of it, Captain, and urged it on us, as we were, roughly speaking, in possession of your views; but we decided that it was not the right thing to do, and we didn't do it."

"It would have been a most reckless and un——"

"Exactly. It would. We felt that it would be so. We couldn't pledge ourselves on the 'Burials' question, you see. Mr Buster, a

strong Nonconformist, but a leading man here, goes for being buried in the parish churchyard, without what he calls 'any priestly abominations.'"

"Well?"

"Well, Captain, we didn't know whether you mightn't insist, so to speak, on the 'abominations;' and, though we got a strong hint that if we could assure him that you would help him to be interred without them, it would, in fact, mean a good many votes, we daren't do it, Captain—daren't do it; and didn't. Besides, it was clear that games were going on between the parties here, which I was only allowed half to see, and I felt that it was quite possible that Buster's votes were safe, without any pledge from you."

"It is a matter of perfect indifference to me whether Mr Buster is buried in the churchyard or in his cabbage-yard; but——"

"Clearly so, and naturally," said Hopper, taking out a pencil, and scrawling an addition to the address, which he read aloud as he wrote —"'Will advocate fullest concessions on this point—will be glad to see all Nonconformists buried—in the manner that may be most satisfactory to them.' There!—that ought to net Buster and his followers!"

"You are too hurried, Mr Hopper; and if you think I am going to make pledges to catch votes, you are mistaken."

"Never dreamt of such a thing, sir! With a man of your mould, that would be out of the question. Quite."

"Then—well, let me look at this paper which is supposed to expound my principles."

"Roughly, Captain; only *roughly*. There it is."

Cosmo ran his eye over it, murmuring aloud the principal heads—"'General support of the Conservative party—time-honoured institutions—economy,' &c. &c.—'a jealous watchfulness over the efficiency of our postal system, especially as regards foreign and colonial mail service—importance of maritime *nexus* between the hemispheres—friction of thought in an international sense—action and reaction—bonds of sympathy tightened—international pulse'—why what on earth is all this?"

"Go on, Captain—go on!"

"'Urgent necessity for reform in oceanic mail-service—gross abuses in this department—for example, as to port selected in connection with mail-service between Great Britain and the grand republic of New Gotham—consider

present state of things a scandal and a reproach, which no Government ought to tolerate, which no Conservative administration would dream of maintaining—if returned, would use every effort to promote governmental action in the matter——'" Cosmo threw the paper down. "The whole thing," he said, "is absolutely meaningless to me."

"For the moment, sir, no doubt it is; but it is full of meaning for the constituency, and that's the main point."

"Is it?"

"Well, in a sense. You see, Captain, what the people in general here want, is to get their port made the port for the Gotham mail-service instead of Dartboro, and what *we* want—that is to say, Mr Glencairn and some of the leading inhabitants of the place—is to get the mail contract transferred from the 'Eureka Steam Navigation Company' to the 'Great Antipodal Steam Navigation Company,' of which they are principal shareholders, and whose ships already have their station here. Very well. You, Captain, as your father's mouthpiece——"

"I will be no man's mouthpiece."

"I was wrong. You will be no man's mouthpiece—naturally not; but, having a son's sym-

pathy in a father's interests, and knowing the utter inefficiency of the 'Eureka'——"

"I know nothing about it!"

"Oh, my dear Captain, but it *is* notorious!"

"Well, well."

"Knowing the inefficiency of the 'Eureka,' and the complete organisation of the 'Antipodal'——"

"Again you beg the question."

"Feeling sure, I should perhaps say, that any organisation which, like the 'Antipodal,' enjoys the direction of such men as your father, is certain to be complete, and therefore best adapted for the public service. Knowing and feeling this, and being aware that Puffboro is nearer to New Gotham by twelve nautical miles, and to London, by five statute miles, than Dartboro is —you can scarcely hesitate to promise your support to the demand of Puffboro, when it asks to have the privilege of Dartboro, in this matter of the mails, transferred to it. The 'Eureka' contract expires in two years. The 'Eureka' and Dartboro have had *their* innings, and misused them. Turn about's fair-play; why shouldn't Puffboro and the 'Antipodal' have their innings next—particularly when that would advance the public interests?"

"But what has all this got to do with politics?"

Hopper held up his hands. "Politics, Captain?—everything: it will settle the politics of this borough for a generation. You see they're a *leetle* bit hazy here *about* politics. The fact is, with a few exceptions, they don't, I suspect, care very much in reality about parties, except in so far as their own interests are concerned. They pretend to, of course, but *I* twig them. *I* twig them. Now Puffboro, with a Liberal member, has been trying to get justice from a Liberal Government. It has always failed. The Liberals have sacrificed it to Dartboro, which returns *two* Liberal members, and is a stronghold of the party. Very well. Now is the moment when Puffboro sees its way to success, by a change of front; for Conservatism is getting rapidly to the top, and is safe to be in power immediately. So what Puffboro is saying to itself is this: 'If we support the Conservative ticket now, a Conservative Government might reasonably be expected to support us, at the expense of Dartboro and Liberalism, when the contract expires;' so, between ourselves"—here Mr Hopper adapted his forefinger to his nose—"between ourselves, I think Puffboro is

inclined to support a Conservative candidate who will pledge himself to bring all pressure to bear in the direction of its wishes."

"What a disclosure of political immorality!"

"Well—in a sense; but there's another way to look at it, and that is, that the worthy folk here enjoy the advantage of having the public interest bound up with their own. The efficiency of international mail-service is no trifle; and if that is promoted with special advantage to the Puffboro people, why, so much the better for them: but they, and their member, are entitled to feel that, in urging their private interests, they are working for the public good, and a Conservative Government which might recognise their services, would be able to feel that they were granting a boon to the nation."

"Provided your statistics are correct."

"They are undeniably and demonstrably correct, Captain Cosmo."

"The real motives would continue equally small and sordid."

"My dear Captain, how far would you go? Would you sacrifice the public interests to avoid the appearance of selfish motives? As for a member of Parliament, he is bound to promote the interests of his constituency, where they

don't clash with imperial interests; otherwise he is not their representative at all."

Cosmo bit his lip, and beat the ground impatiently with his foot. "I detest," he said, "the appearance of a bargain, in such a matter. I feel inclined to give up my candidature."

"But, Captain, you will have to make no *bargain* at all. You will simply have to say, as every other member says, 'I will promote the interests of this borough in every way in which I conscientiously can.' That's not much to say, surely; and I think *that* will satisfy them. You see the Liberals can't promise to meet their views, because that would be promising to sacrifice more profitable supporters at Dartboro."

"I shall make it quite clear to them that there is to be no *bargain* on my part. If they choose to say that my pressing the interests of this port is to be a *sine quâ non*, or even a condition of their political support, I shall tell them that I won't take their political support on such terms."

"Quite! They won't say *that*."

"If, after hearing my views, they are satisfied with them, I can have no objection to say—of course, as a volunteered remark—that my best endeavours to promote their general interests will be at their disposal."

"To be sure. That's it, Captain. That will nick it. Ha! ha!"

"But is there no feeling at all in the borough on *any* political question?"

"Well, there are the Nonconformists, who are always inclined to give trouble. *They* are the politicians; and they *talk*, I believe, of a contest. I don't think they're in earnest. At all events, a few fair words from you would quiet them. I shall know more about *them*, in a few hours. As informed, up to date, my impression is, that their main political belief is that Puffboro is, by twelve nautical miles, nearer to New Gotham than Dartboro is, and therefore, &c. &c. Now, Captain, about the address."

"I won't allow a line of that preposterous production to go out in my name. I have the main points of an address in my head, and, if you will come back in an hour, I can promise to have it ready for you."

"Very well, sir. I'll go and see the committee, in the mean time, and tell them you've come."

Accordingly Mr Hopper betook himself to the leaders of the party, and, with a great many winks and frowns, explained, jocosely, the state of Cosmo's mind.

"The Captain," he said, "is a philosopher, and has a conscience, and some other things that aint very convenient at election times; and he kicks at the idea of making 'a bargain,' as he calls it, for his seat, about this port and contract business. But he'll be as right as a trivet, if you only manage him rightly. Now take this advice from me—that is, if you want him for your candidate,—and you can't get anything like so good a man for *your* purposes as he would be, with his father at his back; take this advice from me—receive his programme, which is sure to be harmless, and accept him unconditionally as your candidate. Not a word about the steamboats. I'll guarantee that he'll do the right thing for the borough, in that matter; I *can* guarantee it. I speak for his father, you know," added Hopper, with a wink which spoke volumes; "but if you press him for a pledge, in his own direct words, he'll very likely throw you over altogether. Be contented with *my* pledge — that is to say, his father's — for him."

Then the committee, satisfied that an autocrat and a millionaire like old Glencairn would certainly be able to control his own son, agreed to this; and when Hopper had brought the ad-

dress, they *did* formally accept Cosmo as their candidate, though some things in the address puzzled them, and might have strained their Conservatism, if there had been any abstract politicians among them. The decision was conveyed to him by a deputation who, warned by Hopper, behaved with great discretion during the interview, keeping the steamboats out of view, and being politic enough (under the same inspiration) to suggest certain modifications of his political programme. Cosmo combated their objections with great earnestness, and, after a show of argument and reluctance, they abandoned their positions, and admitted that he was right. A public meeting was agreed upon, for the following night, and the interview thus terminated to the mutual satisfaction of all concerned, — these worthy politicians desiring to send up to Parliament, not so much an exponent of political philosophy, as an article with a brand which made it marketable ; and Cosmo was delighted to find that the constituency was, after all, inspired by disinterested political principle.

The meeting, which took place as arranged, although it embraced the whole constituency, was not a very large affair, when all were told. There were no "lambs," no tumult, no sort of

excitement. The fact was, Hopper had made good use of his time in the interval; he had "got at" no end of people; and the leaders of the various political sections, who were all either deep in the "Antipodal," or at least closely identified in some way with the maritime interests of the borough, had, that afternoon, come to a pretty fair understanding. In this, Cosmo's pledge—that is to say, the pledge vicariously offered for him by the ingenious Mr Hopper—was an important factor; and Cosmo's brusque utterance about Mr Buster's burial, manipulated into comfortable and comprehensive English by the same artist, was tendered and accepted as a negotiable security.

An air of placidity, then, characterised the assembly; for things had oozed out: it was pretty well understood that the wire-pullers had decided that there was to be no contest, and the wire-pullers being the great employers of labour and the fountains of local patronage, their decision was everything, or nearly so.

Thus, even when Mr Buster, chief of the Nonconformist Radicals, fussed into the room, looking very fierce and uncompromising; and when Mr Batt, captain of the higher Liberal section, stalked gloomily up the hall, as if he,

too, "meant blood," no sensation was produced; even among the most simple-minded of their followers, the general sentiment was "Walker!" Nor could the frantic exertions of Mr Hopper, who stood concealed behind the platform, clapping his hands and shouting "Bravo!" in a boisterous and infectious manner, warm the meeting into any enthusiasm, as Cosmo and his committee entered. Mr Whorkles (Conservative, and chairman of the "Antipodal") took the chair, and introduced the candidate as a gentleman of prodigious talent, and of a political creed so generous, enlightened, soundly constitutional, and, what he might call, philosophically expansive, that he could not conceive any one of any shade of politics—not revolutionary—failing to recognise in Captain Glencairn a right, fit, and proper, &c. &c. "Captain Glencairn," he went on, "is well known as a brave soldier—brave as a lion—as the British lion—who has served his country and bled for it, on many battlefields——" (Here Cosmo made a sharp gesture of dissent.) "Well, perhaps not exactly bled for it—that is an accident beyond the Captain's control,—but served it with every other distinction. He is also known as an eminent scholar, as a capitalist himself, and the son

of one of England's merchant princes. When I add that he has strong local interests——" (another strong gesture of dissent from Cosmo) —"seeing that his father has condescended to recognise that there is, in our town and port, a sphere for his cosmopolitan operations as a capitalist—when I add that he is already heart and soul a Puffboro man" (frantic applause by Hopper and committee), "and that the rights and privileges dear to Puffboro will be jealously safeguarded by him — I think I have said enough to recommend him to your cordial reception; and Captain Glencairn will now himself address you." When the vociferations of Hopper and his *claque* had been stilled, Cosmo proceeded to do so in a very effective manner. His handsome person and bearing produced a favourable impression, and, when he spoke, the charm of his voice and the grace of his language and intonation conciliated the audience, as such advantages always do, even when much that is thus musically conveyed is unintelligible to them.

He began by defining his position as a Conservative.* He was devoted to the constitution,

* When this novel recently appeared in 'Blackwood's Magazine,' the above and a subsequent speech of Cosmo's were given in a more extended form; but in this edition, deferring to the

believing that its fundamental idea was in harmony with the genius of the British people. At the same time, he recognised that institutions require periodical modifications, so as to keep them abreast of changes and growths in the sentiments, conditions, and wants of the nation. He would, therefore, conserve the grand principle of political equilibrium which the constitution aimed at, by welcoming any changes in the methods of its application which might, from time to time, become necessary, so as to guard the essential virtue of the principle from being obscured and hampered by accessories which had ceased to be consistent with the developed conditions of the national life.

He looked upon class jealousies as grand impediments to national prosperity. He was against all legislation that would sacrifice the interests of one class to those of another. Interests must, more or less, come into collision from time to time; and it was the duty of statesmen, holding the balance evenly between classes, to direct and formulate compromises,

opinion of certain friendly critics who questioned the propriety of their introduction in a work of fiction, the author has shortened them as much as was compatible with the purpose which he had in view, which was rather to illustrate character than to ventilate political theories.

and, in the interests of the constitution, to provide compensations by legislation, earnestly considered and wisely timed.

We had recently passed through a period of much legislation. Many great questions had been settled, or put in the way of settlement. He would not pretend that, in all cases, he approved of the methods employed to settle them; but retrogression was foreign to our political usage, and he thought it was the duty of patriotic politicians to accept loyally what the nation had adopted, and to promote subsidiary legislation, so as to give it the healthiest developments.

As a case in point, he would observe that great power had passed into the hands of the lower sections of society, by the extension of the franchise. For his own part, he had always felt that, in any such readjustment, the claims of intelligence ought to have been directly considered. As it was, there was no direct mechanical check on the preponderating influence of uneducated opinion. But the remedy he would seek for this, lay, not in reaction, but in energetically perfecting the system of national education, which we had been far too tardy in inaugurating.

Cosmo then went on to indicate how his general principles would direct his action in reference to certain special topics, such as taxation, pauperism, local government, our military and naval systems, and the Church.

He concluded by discussing, at some length, the relations between capital and labour, for the regulation of which he suggested the outline of a scheme which had occurred to him. Strikes and lock-outs were, he said, wasting the industrial life of the nation, paralysing capital, alienating trade, and leading the country to ruin. There was an inexorable limit to the concessions of capital, placed at the point where its employment ceased to yield profit. But as to the moment when this point had been reached or approximated to, employers and employés might be expected to differ; and thus, in mutual distrust, and in an antagonism of interests which was artificial, lay the source of perpetual dead-locks. Who was to decide between the disputants? Private arbitration had failed. The crisis was grave; it could only be met by a grave remedy, and that remedy he could only discern in the interference of the State. But in what form should the State interpose? It would be clumsy and inconve-

nient to call in the State to arbitrate in every separate case which arose. He would rather apply its intervention, so as to make disputes impossible, and in some such form as this—

As the Bank of England indicated the rate of interest, from time to time, at the discretion of the directors; so the market-price of labour, in all the great industries, might be periodically struck by a Government Board, sitting in permanence, and armed with a final authority which the Bank of England did not possess. Subordinate district boards might supply to the central board the local knowledge which would enable them to adapt their enactments to the varying conditions of the districts.

It might be said that this was an unjustifiable interference with liberty of contract. To this he would reply that, in the gravest disturbances of order, society selected the less of two evils, and turned to despotism to save it from anarchy. He applied the analogy, and justified the arbitrariness of his proposal on exactly the same principle—by pointing to the anarchical state of things which it was intended to correct. With this Cosmo concluded his address, which had the faintest possible interest or meaning for the great majority of his

audience, who, however, applauded vigorously when he sat down.

The political lore of the majority was confined to certain cries and catch-words, and to those parrot-phrases with which that afflictive institution, "Parliament-out-of-session," fatigues the public ear. But in Cosmo's speech there was no cue, of this sort, to start the divine utterances of the *vox populi,* for praise or blame. The eyes of the people, therefore, rested for inspiration on their leaders, who all occupied conspicuous seats. The Conservatives eyed Mr Whorkles; the Liberals watched Mr Batt — dock-proprietor first, and Liberal afterwards; while the ultra-Radicals took their time from Mr Buster, between whose ravages and the Established Church, his interests, as a ship-chandler, acted, for the present, as a sort of breakwater.

As Cosmo's speech proceeded, the approval of Mr Whorkles and his following became more and more marked.

Mr Batt, on the other hand, gradually exchanged an air of armed neutrality for one of allayed apprehension, which was duly reflected in the quietness of his rank and file; while the Nonconformists, under the inspira-

tion of Mr Buster—who had distinctly nodded his head once or twice in approval of Cosmo's sentiments — confined their active demonstrations to a little gentle howling, when Cosmo declared himself for the Established Church. The speech was a great success, in this sense, at least, that it enabled Whorkles, Batt, and Buster to carry out their secret triple alliance, which had for its aim the deliberate transfer of the constituency to the Conservative side, for considerations above explained. If Cosmo had turned out to be too pronounced in his opinions—a Tory, in fact—Batt and Buster could scarcely have ventured even to remain neutral; but, as it was, they felt that his views might conciliate a variety of creeds, and were advanced in such a way as to rouse no partisan animosities: and this impression was exchanged between them in furtive glances of congratulation. A show of opposition was, however, necessary, and it was duly forthcoming when a resolution affirming Cosmo's fitness had been moved. Then, after Mr Batt had received an affirmative signal from Mr Whorkles, in answer to a secret note which asked, "May I risk a question on the assimilation of the franchise?" and after Mr Whorkles had sent

a secret note to Mr Buster, which said, "Go it on the Burial question: he'll fit you, and none of us mind"—Mr Batt rose and said that there was, of course, a good deal in what Captain Glencairn had said which he could not pretend to hold with; still there was a good deal, which, coming from a Conservative, it surprised him, in an agreeable sense, to hear. Considerable breadth of view was indicated in the Captain's professions, and he trusted they were not mere professions. As a very simple test of his sincerity in advocating equilibrium and justice, he would put to the candidate one question—Was he prepared to assimilate the franchise in boroughs and counties, and so relieve the agricultural population from a scandalous injustice?

Cosmo at once replied that he cordially assented to the principle of assimilation, though there were certain questions connected with carrying it out, upon which his mind was not made up.

Whereupon Mr Batt promptly sat down, after stating that the admission of the principle was satisfactory to him and creditable to Cosmo, and that he was not prepared to move a counter-resolution.

Then Mr Buster, with a well-feigned air of expecting no satisfaction, stated that, without criticising the speech in detail, he would take exception to one passage in it, which implied that there were no burning questions exercising the public mind at present. He denied that *in toto*. The grievances of Nonconformists were a burning question—ay! a question that was burning its way into the public conscience. Foremost among these, the great question of the day was that known as the "Burials" question. Now, would the candidate's even-handed justice extend relief to Dissenters in that respect?

Cosmo replied that, as he had before said, he was a faithful Churchman; but he, for one, could see no disloyalty to the Church in desiring to admit Dissenters to the privilege which they desired. He knew that it was largely held by Churchmen that to give way on this point was to surrender an outwork protecting the Church itself; but he was soldier enough to know that it was bad tactics to waste strength upon untenable outworks—and an outwork, which rested upon what he ventured to think was foolish prejudice and injustice, was both weak and indefensible. He would resist with

all his might any unjust encroachments upon the Church; but, both as a matter of right and of expediency, he was heartily for making the concession in question. Whereupon Mr Buster, glancing triumphantly at his disciples, remarked that half a loaf was better than no bread; and that, as no other candidate was before the meeting, he, like Mr Batt, would refrain, for the present, from moving a counter-resolution, and so sat down. The motion was then put to the meeting; and a respectable forest of hands being held up in its favour, though Batt, Buster, & Co. of course remained neutral, Cosmo was declared to be unanimously found "a fit and proper person."

At the nomination, a few days after, no opposition was offered; and Cosmo was elected, believing, in the guilelessness of his heart, that he owed his return to the electors' sympathy with the unselfishness and even-handed justice which illustrated his political creed. The steamboats had been carefully kept in the background. "No pledges! no bargains! I am free as air! and it is a very worthy constituency!" Thus he congratulated himself, innocent of the fact that Hopper had pledged him to Whorkles, and that Whorkles had purchased Batt and the

Liberals with the same pledge, and managed Buster and the Radicals with it and other contrivances, and that the whole of the responsible part of the constituency, more or less, looked upon him simply as the *coupon* of a Conservative bond, in which they had invested, and which they hoped a Conservative Government would honour, when it was presented for payment.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Cosmo's electioneering proceedings began, as we have seen, a few weeks after his flight from Scotland, and before November commenced, he wrote himself M.P. Some time must, therefore, elapse before his new duties would give him that daily employment and occasional excitement which are salutary, in cases like his. His Continental raid, however, followed by the bustle and success at Puffboro, had done much for him, keeping him free from those mists of despondency which are apt to settle on the mind, when sorrow assails a merely contemplative life; and, while the impetus was still on him, he returned with vigour to political study. He had no intention of becoming a Parliamentary specialist — taking up a question and hammering away at it, so as to keep his name before the public, as the manner of some is. But recognising that want of concentration had

hitherto rendered his powers unproductive, he devoted his earnest attention to one or two political problems which appeared to him to be already grave, and likely to be recognised as such in the near future. And thus he passed the remainder of the recess.

His love was deep and true as ever, but he kept it under strong control; and far more successfully now than heretofore, he combated those accesses of reverie which paralyse intellectual vigour. It was no longer a time for dreams. His love had passed from the region of dreams, and, uniting itself, in the noblest way, with the realities of his life, had introduced him at last to the sphere of Duty. Esmè was his guiding star and guardian angel: she had led him to that sphere, and in it he must not dream, but work, for Duty's sake and hers. At times, indeed, the sense of their separation would obtrude itself almost overwhelmingly—so cruelly complete it seemed—grieving him for her, even more than for himself, though he could not dream of the utter desolation of her present lot. But, constantly, her guardian-angel words came back to him—"Say to yourself that I am standing beside you trying to help you with my love and my prayers;" and,

from the words, he took heart and comfort for them both. He went little into society, but he was often cheered by visits from Phil Denwick (now sitting at the feet of Mr Hopper), which were ever welcome; for Phil was the most sanguine and sympathetic of confidants, and, besides, the only one with whom he could speak of Esmè. The only tidings he had had of her were by a letter from Tom Wyedale, written after he had seen her at Rome; and in which, with kindly intent, he made much of the marvellous interest she had evinced in hearing of his doings. "I am now, however, under the ban myself," he said, "and I suspect it is for sake's sake. Never mind! we shall both live to outflank the old gentleman. By the by, he was pretty strong about your Puffboro speech, which he had read, and described it as 'distinctly sinister.' For this, however, you will easily console yourself, when I tell you that Miss Douglas spoke of it with an enthusiasm which made her eyes sparkle and her cheek flush. Oh, you lucky dog!" And, indeed, Cosmo for the moment felt himself to be the happiest and most fortunate of men. That she should admire the speech itself, was much; but his lover's instinct told him that her eyes had

sparkled because she had accepted it as a witness of his loyalty to her, and all his pledges; and *that* was happiness indeed, for it meant *her* happiness—and caused by him.

Poor souls! there was but little comfort for them at this cheerless time! No wonder they made much of such small mercies as came their way.

Thus Cosmo passed the months, gravely, and even sadly, but guarded from morbid melancholy by purpose, labour, and hope. As for Esmè, we have seen what her sad history was, during the section of time which, for the purposes of our narrative, may be considered to have terminated with the opening of Parliament. At that time there was for each, in a certain sense, a new point of departure. For, about that time, the Germistounes returned to London, and, while Cosmo took his seat in the House and inaugurated a career which he hoped might lead him to Esmè, she, under the pilotage of Lady Octopa, was embarked on a new course which was intended, effectually and finally, to separate her from Cosmo. Henceforth, indeed, life had more alleviations for both; but Cosmo had still the best of it. The man usually has, in such cases. Working is better than weep-

ing; and while the woman, as a rule, has to drift, at the mercy of the chapter of accidents, or of the caprice or authority of others, powerless to shape her own course, the man can swim, it may be, against a current so strong as, for the moment, to make progress imperceptible, but still with the great consolation of a conscious exercise of will and effort to reach the point aspired at. Cosmo, then, with his definite work tending in some degree at least in that direction, had the best of it.

But life in the vortex of society—that kaleidoscopic life, with its swiftly succeeding transformations, episodes, and exigencies — forces distraction on the saddest heart, and Esmè, not sadder than she had been in Italy, had here the distraction which was lacking there.

The weeks rolled on; the antepaschal season was in such full swing as Lent permits. Cosmo's voice had not yet been heard in the House. Searching constantly in the Parliamentary reports, Esmè only found his name in the division lists, or, now and then, in connection with a petition embodying some parochial aspiration on the part of Puffboro. On the other hand, Lady Octopa had scored no success; for though Lord Ribston was by this time off in his yacht, to

avenge, on the bodies of bears and arctic sea-fowl, the prompt refusal with which Esmè had met an early proposal from him, her ladyship could not credit herself with the finish of an affair in which she had not started.

Esmè and Cosmo had never met. Each had had a fleeting glimpse of the other, when the other was unaware; but they had not met eye to eye. Esmè longed, yet feared, to meet him —longed to hear his voice again, even though his words should not be for her; yet feared a *rencontre* in society, not knowing how she might control herself, or be able to support the stranger's part which she must play. If they met in the streets even, she did not know what she should do. Might she bow? She was pledged not to communicate with him, and it was a nice question whether to bow were "to communicate." It is pretty obvious how love's casuistry would have settled this question, had the opportunity occurred; but the opportunity did not occur. Nor was it strange, for, in all the world, there is no place where two people are less likely to meet than in London, when it is the object of one to avoid a meeting. And this was Cosmo's object. He foresaw many evil results for them both, and even for their eventual

hopes, should there be a risk of their meeting, even if only occasionally, in society; and so, though his longing was great, to the full, as hers, he exercised stern self-control, and excused himself from all such engagements as seemed likely to lead to it.

Esmè's longing to see him grew and grew: even to hear him spoken about would be something; and to hear him spoken about in connection with some hopeful achievement would be the best of all. But this was denied her; she began to feel that they might as well be the inhabitants of separate planets: and, even in the whirl which her chaperon concocted for her, there were times when she could not struggle with utter despondency. It was during one of these sad crises that Lady Octopa, having a nephew with a military grievance which was to be incidentally ventilated, by some one, during the discussion on the Army Estimates, proposed to take Esmè to the House of Commons, one evening; and Esmè, thinking that she might thus have a chance of seeing Cosmo, unseen herself, and with no violation of her compact, eagerly assented; and they went.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

They were well placed in the gallery; and as the House had not yet gone into committee, the benches were still pretty empty. Esmè, who had never been there before, watched the gradual entrance of the members with interest. She was surveying the *ensemble* of the House, with that sense of disappointment which usually accompanies a first visit to the greatest legislative assembly in the world—thinking, indeed, that it was the most "extraordinary-ordinary" looking assemblage she had ever seen — when her view changed in an instant, and a glory came over the whole place, as Cosmo entered. He looked pale and fatigued, but his handsome face did not lose in interest by that; and his air was as full of spirit and dignity as of old. He entered alone, and Lady Octopa remarked him.

"Do you know who he is?" she inquired,

turning to Esmè, whose heart was beating very quick.

"Yes," she said, with an effort. "Mr Glencairn."

"Oh, yes! one of the new members. I forget what he sits for. Ah! he goes to the right side, at all events. I thought he would. He is very good-looking. Do you know him?"

"Yes—no. We met him abroad, and—and in the Highlands."

"There is really something most distinguished and interesting in his appearance—very much so, indeed!" said Lady Octopa (who had an eye for a handsome man), as she inspected the young member through her glass. "Is he rich? is he a *parti?* *Who* is he?" she continued.

"I believe he is rich," faltered Esmè, "but I cannot give you any particulars about him;" and then she went on hurriedly to inquire who was "that very fat man—just come in—with his hands in his pockets?"

"Oh! *I* should be sorry to know; probably one of the trades-union members. He looks quite the rattener. An odious wretch! But," turning her eyes again to Cosmo, "what a delightful creature, Mr — what is his name? Ah, yes! Mr Glencairn—looks! I declare I

am *quite* smitten. We must find out all about *him.*"

It was sweet to Esmè to hear her lover appreciated, for once; but it was not unmingled sweetness; for her ladyship's appreciation was embarrassing for the moment, and her researches might lead to awkward results. Lord Germistoune, in informing her that there had been "a foolish entanglement" in the country, had not, of course, divulged the name of the entangler.

Business went sleepily on, for a time; a good many questions were asked and answered or evaded, displaying the usual amount of droll antithesis in their subjects, and at last the House went into supply on the Army Estimates.

The Secretary for War made his statement, in the tone of mingled jubilation, apology, and recrimination, which has been sometimes known to characterise such deliverances.

He must admit, he said, that the estimates were large, but they showed no material advance on the estimates of right honourable gentlemen opposite; indeed, any trifling advance there might be, was entirely due to the action of these right honourable gentlemen, when in office.

The army estimates must always be large

in this country; but he ventured to assert that this country would never grudge them, provided they secured an efficiency in the service which he was prepared to show that it at present displayed.

He would admit that, for the moment, there was a certain difficulty in obtaining recruits; but, if trade entered on the period of depression which was confidently anticipated, that difficulty, they might hope, would disappear—and the difficulty was in no respect greater than it had been during the administration of right honourable gentlemen opposite, and the army was notoriously held in an esteem by the nation which it had not enjoyed under them. The quality of our soldiers was much canvassed; but he could not admit that the harsh view occasionally taken of them was just. They were young—that was true; perhaps too young—that was a matter of opinion; but that was a fault which tended to correct itself from the nature of things; and, in any case, the average of the army, in this respect, was as high as it had been when right honourable gentlemen opposite held power.

As for the *physique* of the troops, an American general, whom he had met, last week, at a Guildhall banquet, told him that he had recently

lunched with the general commanding at Aldershot, and afterwards inspected the division there, when the impression he carried away was, that the Aldershot soldier was *twice* the size of the American soldier. Now, making every allowance for the national propensity of Americans to underrate what belonged to themselves, he thought the committee would find, in the opinion of this eminent authority, a satisfactory answer to strictures which had been passed upon the *physique* of our troops. Of course, it might be better—he was not going to deny that—but the improved conditions of agricultural life impeded recruiting in rural districts, and to some extent forced us rather to depend upon the urban population, which was, perhaps, more remarkable for mental activity than great bodily vigour. After all, a robust body was not everything ; but, be that as it might, he was glad to believe that, under the control of right honourable gentlemen opposite, the *physique* of the army had been very much beneath its present standard.

With regard to desertion, they had certainly to deplore a rather high figure. Still, it might be worse ; and he expected much from the abolition of the infamous practice of branding, by

which the deserter had formerly been identified. That abolition was a distinct challenge to the chivalrous nature of British soldiers, which, when they had had time to understand it, they would not be slow to answer, by remaining true to the colours, in enhanced numbers. An honourable gentleman said "Oh!" but he, for one, was proud to express his entire confidence in the chivalrous nature of the British soldier. Well, now, too much was made of this desertion, which evidenced youthful levity and impatience of restraint, rather than a disloyalty which would display itself before the enemy. What he said was, "Bring them before the enemy, and then there would be no desertion." It was all very well for honourable members opposite to cry "Find them first!" but, twenty years ago, the proportion of deserters was nearly as high as at present, and it would be in the recollection of the committee that, at that time, right honourable gentlemen opposite were the advisers of her Majesty.

Our reserve was steadily increasing, and our prospects were altogether hopeful, in that respect. It had swelled this year by the respectable increment of 370 men, and he called that hopeful. At the close of the century it would

amount to no less than 50,000 men, which he ventured to think was considerable. An honourable and gallant gentleman laughed, but he would tell him that if he thought that result tardy and unsatisfactory, he for one did not agree with him. If it were so, however, who, he should like to know, was to blame? Why, who but honourable and gallant gentlemen—members of this House—who systematically impeded military reform, and who, he felt bound to say, as a rule, supported the policy of right honourable gentlemen opposite.

And so the right honourable gentleman went on, in a strain which some members, still sitting in the House, may remember to have been not unusual, making the best of a bad business, asserting that it was not bad, or if bad, better, or at least not worse, than it had been under the sway of political opponents, and painting the future in glowing colours. The impression sought, and with some success, to be left upon a House—which had no sort of wish to face disagreeable truths, and deal frankly with a difficult but vital question—being, that things were jogging on very well,—a little expensively, but still very well; and that, if there were any defects in the working of the system, these

were due to the immense load of difficulties bequeathed, by right honourable gentlemen opposite, to the existing administration, who could not have coped with them at all, but for the extraordinary energy and acumen which they possessed. Codling, in fact, was the friend—not Short.

There was, we may be sure, plenty of loud cheering when the right honourable gentleman sat down, smiling, and awaited the criticism of honourable, and gallant, and other, porcupines opposite. These were to the front, as in duty bound, and the committee were favoured with a considerable diversity of military speculation, theory, argument, anecdote, and sarcasm; notable among which were an elaborate attack upon the existing tactical unit, delivered by a stockbroker, and the remark by an Irish major, that he thoroughly endorsed the right honourable gentleman's statement as to the great esteem in which the army was now held by the nation; as a striking proof of which, he begged to adduce the case of a man whose martial zeal had recently induced him to enlist in ten regiments on one day. The only pity, he added, was that the fine fellow's admiration for them all had been too impartial to let him join any one of them, so

that this sort of zeal was not as profitable as could be wished; and it seemed that, though you might manufacture one man out of nine tailors, you could not be sure of getting one soldier out of ten recruits.

Cosmo sat, with his head resting on his hand, so that his face was concealed, and Esmè, beginning to feel somewhat wearied by all this prosing, sat back to rest, a little absently, so that some portion of the House was out of her view. Presently there was a short lull in the speechifying, and then silence was broken by sounds which recalled her, with a beating heart, from her temporary reverie. Lady Octopa looked quickly round.

"Esmè," she said, "you must not sleep, my hero is going to speak."

The caution was quite unnecessary. Esmè was already sitting up, breathless, motionless, with all her eyes fixed upon *her* hero—her beloved—whose hour, she said to herself, had at last come. What music his voice had for her, as with a slight tremble in it, but with an air of modest self-possession, he entered on the terrible ordeal of a maiden speech! Apparently the House, to some extent, shared her feeling, for there was rather an unusual silence after he had

completed his first sentences, in which he made a graceful apology for so early an intrusion on their attention, which he could only justify by appealing to some little practical knowledge of a profession which had been his own, and some little study and observation of the working of Continental military systems. The House, besides being affected, like other assemblies, by grace of manner and diction, and above all things, by the charm of voice, always gives a generous hearing to all beginners who do not attempt to take it by storm, and Cosmo's manly but respectful bearing, combined with these other personal advantages, procured ready applause for his apology, and bespoke favourable attention for what he had to say.

He wished, he said, to make a few comments upon the right honourable gentleman's statements with regard to recruiting and desertion. The two questions were bound together by the direct relation of cause and effect, and he impeached our present system of recruiting as essentially responsible for the enormous amount of desertion from the ranks which took place. The right honourable gentleman suggested remedial measures, but he ventured to submit that to have a healthy tree you must have a

sound root. There was only one remedial measure, and that was to change the principle upon which our method of obtaining soldiers at present rested. It was no argument to say that, under the same system, our safety and renown had been upheld in former times. Times had changed, the conditions of national life had altered — notably in the greater concentration of the population in towns; and these changes, which had visibly affected the whole national character, had, unquestionably, and gravely, deteriorated both the *morale* and the *physique* of the class with whom the recruiter had mainly to do. There was scarcely a point of resemblance between the soldier of to-day and the soldiers who fought in the Peninsular war. The desertion, alone, showed that we were dealing largely with a class morally worthless; and, physically, the men displayed, in a large degree, the imperfections of a stunted race—that was to say, of a race intended by nature to be stalwart, but whose proportions had been shrivelled by the results of artificial and unhealthy life, hereditarily transmitted. There was no stamina in such men. Our present system, then, tended to give us men morally and physically worthless

—a rotten plank on which to rest the national honour and safety. But did it give us enough even of such men as we possessed? It did not. The matter stood thus:—In times of average prosperity, it was notoriously almost impossible to keep the army up to its strength. When trade was very dull, a rush was made to the service. The most inferior men were, of course, the first to be thrown out of employment, and these were the men who made the rush. It seemed to follow from this, that it was only when trade languished that we could get even a numerically sufficient force to protect the interests of trade.

During the Crimean war, enormous bounties had to be offered to enable us to fill gaps in our ranks with the most wretched material; and even that expedient could only be made to work by resorting to volunteering from the embodied militia, which involved the expense of a double machinery, and forced us, to some extent, to pay twice over for our soldiers. What, then, in the event of a protracted war, would be the result? Why, a radical change of system while warlike operations were in progress, when it would be effected at the greatest risk and disadvantage.

This was what the voluntary system did for us; and he could not anticipate any improvement, from the introduction of a shorter term of service. When the "ten years'" act came into force, a deterioration in the class of men who enlisted was very soon visible; and we had never been able to get the same stamp of soldiers since that time. As for the reserve which might be created under a short-service system, even if the most sanguine anticipations were fulfilled, the results would still be insufficient, and afford no satisfactory compensation for the other disadvantages of the system, among which was the grave one that it would give us nothing but raw and inexperienced non-commissioned officers. At the present moment, we had practically almost nothing to fall back upon.

The voluntary system used to be held up as a subject for national glorification. "Our soldiers are not *compelled* to be soldiers," it was said, boastfully. But the voluntary system was the reverse of glorious; it degraded the profession of arms by placing it in competition—as a matter of money—with other trades, and farther degraded it, by forcing it to compete on such terms that it could only

secure the *residuum* of the labour market. In his humble opinion, the voluntary system was no longer suited to the altered conditions of the country; it was only made to work at all by the splendid qualities of the officers, who were equal in all, and superior in many, respects, to the officers of any other army. Besides, the country, since it formed part of the European system, could not afford, notwithstanding its insular advantage, altogether to vary its usages from those of neighbouring nations, and certainly not where a violent variation involved national risk.

In these words, he indicated the direction in which he would seek a remedy; but he felt that he had already too long occupied the attention of the House, and he would not presume to enter upon the details of any scheme which might have occurred to him. The House, however, taken with Cosmo's manner, good voice, and fluent delivery, and perhaps a little by the unusually frank manner in which, as a "military member," he dealt with so sacred a subject, encouraged him to go on and propound his views; which he did, with much modesty, merely submitting his scheme as a sort of outline of what might contain some elements of a practicable system.

The House, he said, must be prepared to listen to a word at which the country had been carefully taught to shudder, and that was "conscription." That was the vital principle of his scheme. Briefly, the system which he would introduce would combine, with some elements of our own, some elements borrowed from the German and Swiss systems.

He would make the whole male population, theoretically, liable to military service, between the ages of nineteen and forty. This wide area of liability would afford full scope for exemptions, and the interests of the higher classes might be further studied, by recognising, in our organisation, the German "volunteer" or "one-year-man" system. With regard to the ages to be affected by the first incidence of the conscription, that question involved many complex considerations, as to population and so forth, and he would not be expected to settle it offhand; but, as a mere suggestion, he would put the ages at, between nineteen and twenty-three.

The army would be for home service, exclusively, in time of peace; for general service in time of war, or grave national exigency.

Every conscript drawn would be sent to one

of a number of training centres, and would remain there under permanent staffs of highly-skilled instructors, until a high degree of efficiency had been attained.

From each batch of trained conscripts a second selection would be made by lot. Those thus selected would be liable to three years' continuous service with the colours, in camp or garrison at home. The remainder would be dismissed to civil life, being only required to attend an annual training of ten days, and occasionally (in certain categories) certain more extended manœuvres during their period of service.

There would, no doubt, be many difficulties during the process of transition from the old to the new system, and provisional regulations would have to be made as to the incidence of the earlier conscriptions, so that it should not bear too unevenly upon the youngest men. But when the system was developed it would work automatically in distributing its pressure with perfect equitableness. The number of continuous-service-men need not, under the altered conditions, be nearly so great as that of the force now garrisoning the kingdom; and it might progressively diminish as the develop-

ment of the system gave a constantly increasing *potential* army—that was to say, of soldiers not with the colours, of men engaged in all the avocations of civil life, but trained and fit for service in times of exigency; and, with regard to these men, there might be another class of categories of exemption. He then went rapidly into some of the more important details of the scheme, of which this was a rough outline, admitting, finally, that it necessarily involved a dual system, for that, in regard to India, the voluntary system must be retained,—corrected, however, by reverting to the old period of service, for which soldiers, specially engaged for that country, were enlisted; the expense of this force to fall, of course, exclusively upon the Indian Government, its depots to be associated with the territorial army at home, and its officers to be interchangeable with those of that force.

He would encourage the Colonies, in every way, to adopt an organisatian similar to that of the proposed army for home service; and the only difficulty remaining would be with regard to the garrisons of Malta and Gibraltar, which might, however, be met by associating them with the Indian organisation, from which

it might also be advisable to borrow for each of the considerable colonies a model corps, to serve as a standard of efficiency, and a living symbol of the imperial connection. The expenses, under the latter heads, would be a matter for equitable arrangement with the Indian and Colonial Governments.

As to the comparative expense of the proposed and the present systems, they must remember that, under the former, the militia would be abolished, and the volunteers would be unnecessary, and perhaps incompatible with it; and he believed that the *direct* saving, at least, which it would effect, would be very great.

In a few sentences Cosmo thus placed his scheme before the House, and concluded as follows:—

"There may be fallacies and flaws in the principle and in the details of such a scheme; but I venture to think that it has these merits: that, with the smallest possible hardship to the individual—with the smallest possible injury to productive industry, and at a reduction of *direct* expense—it would give us a force large enough, and extensible enough, and strong enough, to place this country in a position of power and

impregnability which it has never before enjoyed—not even during the period when the rest of Europe was less menacing and less aggressive, from being less armed. For it would not merely give us the advantage of adequate numbers; it would yield quality as well as quantity; it would fill the ranks of the army with the flower instead of the weeds of the population, giving us a rank and file worthy of the officers, who, as a class, possess every quality which is most nobly typical of the English race. I fear I shall be met with the cry, 'Conscription! the people will never stand that!' Change the name, then, and call it 'consecration.' Don't tell the people that they will never stand it. If you think it is right, tell them that they *must* stand it. Tell them that the men they have elected to govern them, know that it is for the country's good, and they *will* stand it, if they see you are in earnest. If you are afraid to do this—afraid of what?—afraid of compromising party interests?—afraid of responsibility? It can scarcely be anything else. Well, then, if you prefer party to patriotism, you are unfit to rule; and, as to responsibility, it is possible to reign without governing, but it is impossible to govern, if you shrink

from all initiative and all control of public opinion."

The concluding apostrophe was addressed neither to one party nor to another, but generally to the Legislature. Those who sat on the same side with Cosmo, however, gave it, of course, a party signification, and cheered vociferously, though probably the main propositions of the speech were unpalatable to the majority of the cheerers. The results, however, as far as Cosmo was concerned, were highly satisfactory, the cheers of the party being added to the cheers of those who generously recognised the merits of a new speaker, and of those who, in various parts of the House, sympathised with military reform in general, and with any assault on the existing state of things military. So that when Cosmo sat down, though he had somewhat strained the usages of the House, it was amidst strong manifestations of general applause. We have seen that, in the old period of his hesitations, he asked himself this question—

> "Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,
> Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?"

And, no doubt, to the vast majority of his audience, on this occasion, the quotation would

have sounded apposite; but he was fluent, musical, gentleman-like, and spoke with an air of thinking earnestly about his subject, and not about himself at all. Hence these cheers. A combination of circumstances had made his maiden speech a signal success.

"Capital! I like him!" said Lady Octopa. "He is very handsome, and seems to be so deliciously in earnest. I like him. My dear child, what is the matter?"

The cheers had been too much for poor Esmè. Her face was pale, and her eyes were full of tears. She murmured that the heat was overpowering, and that she would like to go; and Lady Octopa kindly consented to leave, with the tale of her martial kinsman's grievances unheard.

There was a considerable fuss in the papers next morning about the speech. It was approved of very warily, by a very few; it was assailed by most, from opposite points of the compass: this organ described it as despotic and arbitrary — that organ stigmatised it as democratic and revolutionary; but they nearly all agreed in the fine old imperviously-crusted objection,—it involved a principle which the country "would never stand." At the same

time there was a general recognition of Cosmo's patriotic motive, and of his promise as a parliamentary speaker. It was talked about, of course, in society, too. Lady Octopa had a dinner-party the next night, and was full of it. Lady Octopa was clever, but she devoted the *fine fleur* of her brains to social intrigue. In politics she was cynically without principle, and disbelieved in any political motive, apart from party or personal considerations; but Cosmo's "escapade" delighted her by its novelty and audacity, and she was full of it.

"Instead of humdrumming in the Lords, you should have been with Esmè and me in the Commons last night, Lord Germistoune," she said to the old lord, who, with his daughter, was of the party.

"Ah, indeed!" said Lord Germistoune, who had been too gouty to read the parliamentary reports, and had not heard of the incident,—"ah, indeed! was there anything stirring there?"

Esmè, who was within earshot, turned pale.

"Oh, yes!" said her ladyship; "a young member made his maiden speech, and dashed into the middle of the Estimates, with all sorts of startling ideas to show that the money would be wasted, as long as we are what we are."

"Ha! ha! one of the new-light Radicals."

"Not at all; a Tory, a very handsome man, with the most delightful voice in the world, and a capital speaker. I quite fell in love with him. He wishes to introduce the Swiss system, or something of that sort,—only fancy! But he managed to make it sound very plausible."

"The contemptible scoundrel!"

"No, no; I tell you I am in love with him, and I cannot hear him spoken of so. I am resolved to know him, and to make him quite my *protégé;* and he is an immense *parti,* I hear. The odd thing is, I can't remember his name. Colonel—Colonel—I know he *is* a soldier——"

"Lord Alexander Overslaugh, perhaps? He is a clever youth, but has some sinister ideas."

"No, no; not Lord anything: Colonel or Major or Captain something. Oh! what *is* his name? Esmè, you can tell me; what is his name?"

"Whose name, Lady Octopa?" gasped Esmè.

"Why, the handsome member, with the fine eyes and the divine voice—last night, you know—in the House."

Esmè made no reply.

"Why, how stupid you are! The man who abused the army; said they were all stunted

and immoral? Why, you *do* know him. Now I remember, you told me so."

"Mr Glencairn," muttered Esmè, with her eyes cast down.

"Of course! Mr Glencairn. Do you know him, Lord Germistoune?"

"I do *not*," said his lordship, with keen emphasis.

"Ah, well! you must come and meet him here. He belongs to the party,—a most ornamental addition to it!"

"It is always a privilege to meet any of your ladyship's friends; but this man, who is not yet among their number, I must decline to meet."

"Lord Germistoune! Why?"

"Why? because he is a——" The old gentleman paused, recollected himself, and only said—"Any one who could venture, and from the Conservative benches, to suggest the adaptation of any republican monstrosity to our system, is a renegade, and a traitorous charlatan. As such, I should decline to meet him, even at your ladyship's table."

"Nonsense! If you heard him—if you saw him, you would be at once converted."

"I am sorry to controvert your ladyship's view; but I distinctly say 'No!'"

"How harsh! Esmè, don't you think Colonel Glencairn would make a conquest of your father, as he did of you and me?" Esmè, half fainting, turned to her next neighbour and tore him away from another conversation, and thus evaded a reply to Lady Octopa, who then let the subject drop.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A FEW days after Cosmo had made his *début* in the House of Commons, Tom Wyedale asked him to dine with him at the "Kakodaemon." Tom had managed to bring, through the fire of *baccarat* at Rome, a fair amount of the spoil which he had taken from M. Blanc at Monte Carlo; and what with this — what with his matrimonial feint, which, besides enabling him to appease the rustier of his creditors, had yielded a reasonable little profit to himself—he was able again to enjoy what he called a "Christian-like" season in town. The dinner was a very pleasant one. The Marquis, who had run over for a Newmarket meeting, had been captured by Tom; and when Tom and the Marquis got together, there was certain to be good fun. When the dinner was over, these two quaint allies strolled up the street with Cosmo, for they were all going to "finish" at Tom's chambers.

On the way, Tom suddenly recollected that he must look in at Mrs Combleton's ball—just for an instant. Mrs Combleton was a familiar cousin and ally of his own, so he could introduce the Marquis—especially as he was a foreigner; but had Cosmo an invitation? Yes, Cosmo had, but he never went to balls now. "Nonsense!" cried Tom. "Come, just for three minutes. Three minutes of—call it boredom if you please—will give a zest to subsequeut tobacco. I *must* go, because I have to arrange with the Rimmons, who are to be there, about going to the country with them to-morrow morning, for a day or two: but I promise not to keep you. Come along!" Eventually Cosmo was persuaded, and they went.

Mrs Combleton lived in one of the big houses in Grosvenor Place, which afforded ample scope for a large ball; but, on this occasion, its capabilities were strained by the number of the guests who, even more than is usual, overflowed from the dancing-room, vainly seeking space and coolness, in divers havens. In "the open," at the top of the staircase, several dowagers had secured comfortable positions for general observation, and favourable bases for operating on the supper-room at the fitting opportunity. As

the three friends made their way up-stairs, one of these dames hurriedly called a neighbour's attention to them, and, as they were passing, she stopped Tom Wyedale.

"That is Mr Glencairn who is with you?" she whispered, rather eagerly.

"Yes. I understand. He has made a speech. He is being spoken about. You wish me to present him."

"Thanks, if you will. I am in love with him."

Tom went to Cosmo. "Come," he said, "and be introduced to a lady who is in love with you." And Cosmo went, and was presented to Lady Octopa Hawker.

Her ladyship was extremely frank and gracious. "I liked your speech the other night," she said.

Cosmo was very proud to hear it; and she went on—"I don't know much about the merits of the case; but I like your style; and you really seemed to believe what you said. *Did* you *really* believe it?"

Cosmo laughed. "Naturally," he said, "or I would not have said it."

"Not naturally, at all. The more people appear to be in earnest, the less they are so, as a rule. We are all shams and humbugs!"

"Let us except ourselves."

"Well, I will except you, if you please. And you really *were* in earnest?" gazing at Cosmo as a naturalist regards a rare specimen.

"I *really* believed I was, but you begin to shake my faith."

"I was there, you know. I heard you myself."

Again Cosmo was very proud to hear it, and Lady Octopa continued—"I was talking about your speech at dinner, this evening, to Sir Gasper Puffin. He didn't like it at all. He is a general, you know, of the old school; and he says you are a Radical, and ought not to sit with the Conservatives. You mustn't be a Radical. It won't pay, in the long-run."

"I begin to think I don't know the meaning of the word Radical, or any party designation. At present these names appear to stand in the way of any rational classification of opinion. *Apropos* of this miserable speech, I have been described as of every opposing shade of politics. What *is* a Radical, Lady Octopa?"

"Oh! a destructive—an anarchist, of course."

"Ah, well! my poor speech had very different designs. It was a humble attempt to suggest a method of self-preservation to the country; and the substitution of an orderly system for a system of happy-go-lucky."

"Perhaps, perhaps; but you mustn't be a Radical. It doesn't pay. Ah, my dear! here you are! Pray sit down, and occupy this place. I can see that that old frump Lady Anathema Towsler is steering for it."

Lady Octopa faced the ball-room door, and Cosmo's back was turned to it; so he had not observed the approach of the young lady addressed, and who had been brought up at that moment by her partner.

He turned to make way for her, and beheld Esmè. She stood with her eyes cast down. Her emotions can be understood more readily than described; and in addition to them all, was the supreme difficulty of deciding how to look, or speak, or act. The *rencontre* which she had foreseen as possible, some time or other, in London society, had occurred in the most awkward way, and found her without any prearranged line of conduct. She stood, therefore, like one transfixed, without raising her eyes. Cosmo also stood perfectly silent and motionless. The real facts of the situation escaped Lady Octopa. She fancied this was one of those cases which so often occur, when people, who have had a casual acquaintanceship at one time, meet after a long interval, and don't quite know whether the

acquaintanceship is, or is not, supposed to continue.

"I think, Esmè," she said, "you and Mr Glencairn have met before?"

Esmè, without looking up, murmured some sort of assent, and bowed in the direction of Cosmo. At that moment her chaperon exclaimed, "I see Mrs Honiton going, and I must just say one word to her. Pray sit down, Esmè, and keep my place. I shall be back in an instant," and so left them. Something else had happened to empty the rest of the sofa, and they were alone together, for the first time since, in the wild and beautiful Highland scene, they had repledged their eternal troth—

"Sealed it with kisses, watered it with tears."

Esmè sank into Lady Octopa's place, and gazed on the ground.

"Esmè, darling!"

"Oh, Cosmo, please don't speak to me! Don't make me break my promise."

"Only tell me that your love is the same!"

"I must tell papa everything I say to you."

"Are you afraid to own to him your love?"

"No, Cosmo; but you do not know what I shall have to suffer. But ah! my darling, my darling!" she murmured, looking up, "I cannot

bear to see your poor pale face so sad. No, my love is not the same, but far, far stronger; it grows every day—that is the only change it can ever know. Is that enough, dearest?—is that enough?"

"It is the sweetest music I ever listened to, and——"

"So much for Mrs Honiton; she has gone on to Lady Crushley's; and I think, if you are ready, dear, we had better go on there too. I am perishing with thirst, and the champagne here is not drinkable—never is. That wretch, Mr Wyedale, said just now that 'Fortnumately' it's only gooseberry; but I want real wine. Let us go."

Thus Lady Octopa; and Cosmo took them down to their carriage; and it was well with him, and well, too, with Esmè,—for the moment, that is to say. But not so well with her next morning, when, feeling thereto in honour bound, she went resolutely to her father and related what had chanced between Cosmo and herself. Then all the storms of the autumn and of winter were reawakened. There was a terrible scene. Cosmo was denounced to Lady Octopa. Police supervision set in again, and it was very far, indeed, from being well with the poor girl.

CHAPTER L.

Some weeks later, Cosmo, on returning to his rooms, found a gentleman there, awaiting his arrival. He was old, tall, very yellow, and very wizened; and his clear hazel eyes, made prominent by the emaciation of his face, had a look of intensity and scrutiny which seemed habitual. He was a total stranger to Cosmo; yet, when the latter entered and bowed to him, courteously, but with an air of inquiry, he did not rise from his seat.

"You are Cosmo Glencairn?" he asked.

"That is my name," said Cosmo.

"I am glad to see you. Shake hands. Excuse me for keeping my seat. I am old and ill—infernally old and infernally ill—a ruin tumbling to pieces; and there ought to be no ceremony between you and me." Cosmo shook hands with him, but not quite seeing why his visitor's dilapidation should place

them on such free and easy terms, remained standing.

"Sit down!" said the old gentleman; "it fidgets me to see you standing." The man was evidently "a character," and Cosmo, feeling strongly inclined to laugh, complied.

"I am pleased with you," continued his visitor.

Cosmo bit his lip and bowed, but said nothing.

"You are good-looking; you look like breeding (which is a piece of internal evidence), and you are going to do well in the House, I hear. This is as it ought to be. I am pleased with you."

"You are very flattering, but may I ask——"

"Are you like your father?"

"Really, sir!—Well, I don't know that I am considered so; but——"

"I am glad of that; I hate your father."

"Sir, I cannot submit——"

"Yes, you can; for I will correct myself and say that I *hated* him. I mean to let bygones be bygones. If any one were to run against me, and strike me in the region of the liver, he would pulverise it."

"May I ask how that bears upon your reconciliation with my father?"

"Yes, you may. It bears upon it in this way —that when a man's organs are in this brittle state, death must be near him, and he ought, as the Bible says, to agree with his adversary quickly; particularly when that adversary ought to close his eyes. You see that?"

"Indeed I don't. I know nothing of your variance with my father—whom you don't even seem to know by sight; and how it should be his duty to close your eyes, puzzles me, I confess."

"Know nothing of our quarrel? Has he never spoken to you about me?"

"I must remind you that you have not yet done me the honour to introduce yourself."

"What do you mean?"

"Frankly, that I don't know who you are."

Considering his fragility, the old gentleman jerked himself out of his chair with great energy—

"Not know who I am? Why, you got my note warning you of this visit, didn't you?"

"No, I have not received any note."

"I sent one last night. These scoundrels at the hotel have neglected it, confound them! There's no sort of discipline in this country, confound it! Then, of course, you don't know

that I am your uncle, Robert Glencairn ?—*Sir* Robert Glencairn, by the by, from to-day, when they have gazetted me K.C.S.I. on retirement—a *little* late in the day, I think."

Cosmo's manner, of course, changed at once, and he offered his uncle all manner of hearty welcomes and apologies; and then the conversation was renewed on a different footing, and carried on for a long time. In the course of it Sir Robert, after stating that he had only arrived from the East the day before yesterday, described his career in India, with which he was dissatisfied. Of his brother and also of his own liver he spoke rather acrimoniously, attributing the waste of his life to their influence. If his brother would have advanced the necessary funds to enable him to take advantage of an opening in the indigo trade which had offered itself, he would have been a rich man and at home, twenty-five years ago; if his liver had only conducted itself with any sort of propriety, his period of exile would have been more useful and more endurable. "But," he added, "as I said before, I am going to let bygones be bygones with your father. As for my liver, it is honeycombed to the extent of being the merest phantom and pretence."

By-and-by he opened a subject of deeper, and, indeed, of vital interest to Cosmo; and, in speaking of it, almost all the eccentricities of his speech and manner left him.

"Has your father," he asked, "ever spoken to you about our family?"

"Only once, at my urgent request. I was, and am, eager, even desperately eager, to discover the facts of our history."

"That is right! that is excellent!—instinct of family pride—another internal proof! The subject has been, I may say, on my mind all my life. My father incessantly spoke of it, and I was taught from my infancy to believe that we were not what we appeared — nameless illegitimate nobodies — but very much the reverse indeed. It is maddening that we should not be able to get at the truth! Did your father tell you the whole story?"

"Yes, all that he knew. I will repeat his version, and perhaps you will make any corrections or additions which it is in your power to make?"

Cosmo then went over his father's summary, and when he had done so, his uncle said that it was, in the main, correct.

"I must add, however," he said, "an im-

portant fact. Though my father was a young child when he was left an orphan, he had a distinct recollection that, on one occasion, this extraordinary parent of his—this man who has mystified us all—was in a violent passion, on account of some social slight which he had received, and, in abusing those who had slighted him, swore that, if he only chose to declare who he really was, instead of being treated with contempt, he would be at the head of the society of the place—that 'these wretches would be all crawling to him!' The phrase remained in the boy's memory, and, of course, influenced my father's belief as well as my own. There is, besides, plenty of internal evidence that we are people of lineage. You don't get features like ours, and carriage, and so forth, without blue blood; you don't get tempers like ours without it. My grandfather, my father, your father, and I myself, have all had violent autocratic tempers. How are *you*, in that respect?"

Cosmo could not repress a smile, despite the old man's earnestness, as he replied that he believed he had, at least, a pretty firm will.

"Exactly!" said his uncle. "Well, all that proves descent from a race accustomed to com-

mand, to rule, to be obeyed. I think we may be satisfied, on many grounds, that in that respect we are all right. Then, as to the legitimacy question, what evidence have we on this head? Mr Denwick, who was senior partner of my grandfather, was the only evidence; and his testimony amounts practically to nothing, *pro* or *con*. My grandmother died within a year of her arrival in India; and, as a matter of fact, Mr Denwick saw nothing of the young couple during her life, and very little of my grandfather at all. They were associated in business; but my grandfather's branch of it lay at a great distance from Calcutta, where the headquarters of the firm were. All that Mr Denwick could say about the matter really was this,—that my grandfather (who must have had his small patrimony paid him) was introduced to the firm by a gentleman of high standing in Calcutta, and who, in answer to inquiries which were naturally made as to character, stated that the youth had quarrelled with his family on account of a love-scrape; that he had brought the girl with him to India; that he had changed his original name, and desired that it should remain unknown. No doubt, my grandfather had satisfied this gentleman as to his real name

and history; for the gentleman could not otherwise have guaranteed him. But here there is neither affirmation nor contradiction of a marriage; and if old Mr Denwick took up the impression that there had been no marriage, the evidence which guided him is not apparent, and does not seem to have been stated by him. 'He never heard there had been a marriage'—that is all. The probability is that he had thought nothing of the matter till inquiries were made, after my grandfather's death. The latter died very early; and as he lived in a remote district, we may assume that there never was any close intimacy between himself and the principal of his firm. If Mr Denwick took the child (my father) under his protection, and looked after its interests, it was only what any reasonably benevolent man would have done in the case of the child of a partner, left an orphan and absolutely alone in a strange land, and who, moreover, inherited some pecuniary interest in the business. The fact is, Mr Denwick's intimate connection with our history was really subsequent to my grandfather's death; so, unless some dispute about the child's inheritance had arisen, there was no reason why the question of a marriage should have come before him

at all. As a matter of fact, no dispute did, or could, arise about the trifling inheritance, which passed to the child by a very brief will, scrawled by my grandfather on a scrap of paper, when on his death-bed.

"My father's own inquiries then, when he was nearly grown up, might first cause Mr Denwick's mind to be turned to the marriage question seriously, and then any information he had once possessed might be hazily remembered or forgotten altogether.

"My grandfather, after his last seizure, was very soon unconscious, and had little time to do or say anything. A subordinate of the firm was the only European near him. This person he directed to hand his papers and effects over to Mr Denwick, to whom he sent a message begging him to take charge of the child. He left Mr Denwick his Bible as a souvenir; and his last wanderings appear to have run, not in any way upon his wife and the marriage, but, in a pious direction, upon the necessity of studying the Holy Book and considering his child's precious interests, apart from the worldly consideration of his small inheritance. The papers he left were stated by Mr Denwick to relate solely to the business of the firm, with the

exception of the will and the certificate of my father's birth and baptism at a station of the East India Company, both of which were handed over, and are now in my possession.

"My father frequently importuned Mr Denwick, and, after him, his son, for all the papers; but they both declined to give, or even to show, them, as they related to private transactions in business. This refusal eventually led to a coolness between my father and the second Mr Denwick, who steadily repeated the same assurances to me after my father's death; and there was apparently nothing more to be made of the matter through that channel.

"At one time I advertised largely in Scotland, begging for information, from any gentleman's family, in whose records it might appear, that one of their members had disappeared about the year 1780, gone abroad, and lived, presumably, under a feigned name. Nothing, however, was forthcoming, and I have let the matter drop for a good many years, not meaning to let it drop finally, but waiting till, with the advantages of being at home and at leisure, I could prosecute the inquiry on a larger scale. I am now at home and at leisure, but unfortunately I am dying."

"You must not say that, uncle."

"I must recognise the truth; and I wish now to get your promise to prosecute the search when I am gone. You are rich, you have the instinct of family pride, you can afford to do it,—and you *will* do it?"

"Certainly; but I hope you will live to do it yourself."

"While I have any sort of vitality left I will certainly do so; and the first thing to be done is to discover the representative of the Denwicks. Do you know anything about him?"

"Intimately. Philip Denwick, the son of your guardian, is my closest friend; and, by chance, he dines with me this very night."

"You think he will not be averse to showing any of those papers, if he has them?"

"I am sure he would not; but I doubt if he has any in his possession. His father was all but ruined before his death, and Phil himself entirely so, by an unfortunate speculation. He had no house or property of any sort, when a friend was able to save him. He is now doing well; but I doubt if he has anything—even a paper—which belonged to his father."

"You will ask him, at all events. The next thing is to put the whole case into the hands of some clever investigator. I understand that such inquiries are now conducted by experts, as a profession."

"Yes, that is true."

"Well, we must start them on the business at once, and guarantee them ample funds and ample rewards."

Here the interview ended, the state of Sir Robert's liver compelling him to decline Cosmo's invitation to meet Phil at dinner.

When the matter was opened to Phil, he stated, contrary to Cosmo's expectation, that two large tin boxes, containing, he believed, a number of papers connected with Indian and other business, were in the possession of an old maiden aunt of his, to whom he had confided them (meaning to look through them some day), with a few family relics, at the time when he sold off all his father's effects, and began to lead a wandering life. The old lady lived in a remote part of the country; but the boxes were soon sent up to town, and placed in the hands of the experts to whom Sir Robert had intrusted the conduct of the inquiry.

In a week the following result was reached. The boxes contained no papers, in any way, connected with the Glencairns. The only thing concerning them, at all, was the Bible bequeathed by Cosmo's great-grandfather to Phil's grandfather. It was a plain old pocket-Bible. On the fly-leaf was written—

"To Jean G. from Norman G.,
1st June 1781,"

and, underneath, the motto—

"Search the Scriptures."

On the reverse side was a memorandum by old Mr Denwick—

"Left to me by Norman Glencairn, who died in India 1787. R. Denwick."

The investigators, of course, assumed that Jean G. was Norman Glencairn's wife; and there is, or was, much virtue, according to Scotch law, in any matrimonial declaration or implication written on a Bible, in the familiar use of the parties.

But there were two fatal defects here. If the full names had been written, it might, perhaps, have been argued, according to Scotch law, that Norman Glencairn and Jean Glencairn acknowledged each other to be man and

wife, and became man and wife, by the fact of that writing in the Bible; but the mere initials were insufficient. The second defect was, that there was nothing to show that the writing had been made in Scotland, without which it had no virtue at all.

Phil presented the Bible to Sir Robert Glencairn, and that seemed all that he was likely to make by the investigation, as far as the Denwick connection could help him. When another week had elapsed, however, the investigators reported with triumph what was, so far, a solid comfort and consolation to their clients, and this was—that having advertised a considerable reward for proofs of a marriage contracted between parties of the name of Norman Glencairn and Jean ——, in Scotland, in or about the year 1781, they had received from the session-clerk of the parish of Greyfriars, Edinburgh, an extract from the parochial register, certifying to the marriage, in that parish, of Norman Glencairn to Jean Lothian, on the 1st of June 1781, after the banns had been "cried" three times on the previous Sunday.

The legitimacy was thus established, and the Bible had been given by Norman to his

wife on their wedding-day. Sir Robert was greatly elated, a load was taken off Cosmo's mind, and their hopes of further discoveries were high for a time. But alas! there the matter ended. The investigators could get no manner of clue to connect Norman Glencairn with any gentleman's or any other family; or, indeed, to trace his history, for a single day, beyond the day of his marriage. It appeared, therefore, that his descendants must console themselves for the shortness of their pedigree by its cleanness, in so far as was known of it.

The matter continued formally in the hands of the investigators, but rather because Sir Robert was unwilling finally to surrender a hope which had become with him an *idée fixe*, than because they held out any anticipations of success.

The disappointment affected the old man's already shattered health very injuriously; his vitality ebbed away; his interest grew languid even in a possible discovery, as in all the concerns of this world; and his days were evidently numbered.

CHAPTER LI.

One afternoon towards the close of the session, Cosmo was just leaving his rooms to go down to the House, when he encountered Phil Denwick at the door.

"Ah, Phil!" he cried, "well met. You'll walk with me, won't you?" then added, with a start, as he looked into his friend's face, which was strangely pale and disturbed, "Good heavens! what's the matter?"

"Come back—come into your rooms, Cosmo, and I'll tell you." So they went back.

"Now Phil," cried Cosmo, "out with it!"

"Poor Cosmo! poor Cosmo!" groaned Phil.

"Something has happened to me, then?"

"My best friend! my kindest friend! Poor Cosmo!"

"Hang it, Phil! give me the facts first, and the sentiments afterwards."

"Ruined! smashed! swindled!"

"Who is? I?"

"Everybody."

"That's pretty comprehensive; but please explain."

"Hopper has absconded."

"Absconded? Hopper? Impossible!"

"Yes; ruined the Company first, and then bolted: left nothing behind him but mountains of iron."

"I'm glad to hear he has left behind anything so substantial; but has he taken much money?"

"Not a farthing."

"Why on earth has he absconded, then?"

"There was no money to take."

"That sounds a strange reason."

"Not at all; there are liabilities to meet which amount to more than three-quarters of a million, and there's little or nothing to meet them with. That's why he bolted."

"But where *is* the money?"

"All buried in this iron."

"Well, but if the iron is there, why he should have absconded is still a mystery."

"Not at all; iron isn't money, and now it isn't even money's worth. It's a drug in the market—unsaleable. We're all ruined and done for. Hopper has been a maniac. He has bought

up iron enough to build a metropolis with. To do this he has used all our money and borrowed enormously; and now we have to repay his borrowings—that is to say, to pay for the iron at a price which is thirty, forty, or fifty per cent above its present value—and only its nominal value, for there is no market for it and practically no price. Do you understand now?"

"To a certain extent. What object could he have if it was not plunder?"

"Oh, to make a grand *coup* for the Company. He is ambitious and speculative, and thought he saw his way. I'll show you what he says, in a moment. We had the quarterly meeting today. We met, thinking no evil. Hopper hadn't put in an appearance at the office in the forenoon; but a letter addressed in his writing had come for the chairman, and we supposed it would explain his absence. It did explain it, very completely. I took a copy of the letter, and here it is. Read it."

Cosmo took it and read as follows :—

"London, *July* 18—.

"Sir,—With a hand which trembles so that I can hardly guide the pen, I write this—a confession not of guilt, but of misfortune. Opera-

tions of mine, dictated by the purest zeal, but thwarted by circumstances beyond my control, have, I fear, fatally compromised the interests of the Company; and my feelings will not permit me, at present, to face its representatives. I am retiring, therefore, into a, so to speak, temporary seclusion; but a full explanation of the Company's unfortunate position and the causes which have produced it, will be found in my desk (key enclosed).

"From it you will perceive that the Company will have, within a few days, to face a demand for over £700,000. All the debentures issued by the Company are under notice, and fall due immediately, and many acceptances, which cannot be renewed, will come to maturity at the same time; there being, to my regret, no appreciable provision to meet them.

"The honesty of my intentions will, however, be obvious to the Company, when they find that the moneys covered by the debentures and bills are fully represented by iron in their possession; and, even in the moment of their affliction, they will probably find a gloomy satisfaction in the feeling that they are the largest holders of this metal in the world!

"In securing this splendid holding, I believed

that I was making the fortune of the Company. I confess that I made the operations on my own responsibility; but, if I blinded the Board, and, so to speak, managed individual directors, I justified this by the consideration that, from lack of courage, they might lose a golden opportunity. All mortals are liable to error, and error induced by noble motives is worthy of generous sympathy rather than of austere blame. It is from this point of view that the Company will, I feel confident, regard my proceedings.

"As to the measures which ought to be adopted in view of the impending demands the Board will excuse me from offering any suggestions. On this point I have already racked my brain to no purpose; and I now prefer to pass the painful subject by in a respectful silence. I would venture to make one appeal on behalf of my honoured friend the guarantor. I trust that that blameless gentleman may not be compelled to bear the loss too exclusively. I would say to the Company, 'Remember, gentlemen, that you are Christians, and, being strong, be merciful.'—Your afflicted, humble servant, PETER HOPPER.

"The Chairman,
A. Glencairn & Co., Ld."

"I scarcely know," said Cosmo, whose face was now sufficiently grave, "what the full bearing of this is."

"We very soon discovered *that*," said Phil, who then gave him a rapid *résumé* of Hopper's statement, which, with a few necessary explanations, we will, as briefly as possible, retail.

For a considerable time prior to these events, the commercial atmosphere had been darkening everywhere. Wars, and warlike rumours, national repudiations and insolvencies — these, with many other influences, had taken all vitality from the trade of the world. Great Britain had suffered above other countries, and in no department was the depression so severe as in her iron trade. The Glencairn Company had commenced its career when the antecedent wave of prosperity was at its height; but the wave turned over shortly after its inauguration; the Company's profits had continuously diminished; and Mr Glencairn, its guarantor, had been obliged largely to supplement the last dividend, so as to bring it up to the minimum which he had guaranteed. Mr Hopper—the managing director—had great ascendancy over the ordinary directors, most of whom, including the chairman, were simply country gentlemen,

and none of whom were, in any true sense, men of business. Mr Glencairn's confidence in the manager contributed to the ascendancy of the latter, and relieved him of the interference of Mr Glencairn himself, who was, in little more than name, a member of the Board. Mr Hopper, who was thus in a position of power, was, unfortunately, speculative, sanguine, and adroit. The decline in trade he regarded as a temporary check, which suggested to him not retrenchment but expansion: he saw in it an opportunity of securing a grand, if deferred, increase of profitable business, by assuming the relinquished operations of other firms; and for this purpose he induced the Company to provide ways and means, by issuing debentures for £300,000. At the same time, it unhappily occurred to him that an immense holding of the manufactured article, secured at the present depreciated rates, would give the Company a very powerful position when the demand revived. He therefore invested the whole of the debenture money in iron, and further increased his operations by means of the Company's acceptances, till his holding touched the value of three-quarters of a million. The money was at his disposal in this way—that, though his cheques required the

countersign of two directors, he could always *choose* his directors, and mystify them as to the destination of the funds; and, acting similarly with regard to the acceptances, he thus, and by other stratagems, contrived that the Company should know nothing of the great transactions in which they were involved.

But Mr Hopper had bought too soon. Prices continued to fall alarmingly, and did not touch their lowest point till long after his last purchases had been made. Just at this time most of the debentures (under notice), and all the acceptances, were about to fall due; and, in a word, Mr Hopper found the Company confronted with an imminent demand for £750,000, there being nothing to meet it with but the unsaleable stock of iron, of which, in the regular way of business, they had, besides, a considerable accumulation. He exhausted every expedient, but in vain; and on the eve of a general meeting, when the explosion of his schemes was due within ten days, he disappeared. Such was the history which Phil communicated to Cosmo.

"I still," said the latter, "do not fully comprehend what effect all this will have upon the shareholders, and what it will mean for my father."

"It means, first of all—which affects me most of all—that your goodness to me has probably cost you £25,000. O Cosmo! why did you not leave me to drift and starve? I am one of those wretches who bring ill-luck to every one. I should never have let you do what you did."

"That was my affair, Phil; and in the same circumstances I would do it over again. Don't distress yourself about that. I have more than enough of money without it—both for you and myself."

"But twenty-five thousand pounds!"

"Never mind the figure; I tell you it won't break me. But how can it all be lost?"

"Well, the Company must stop payment unless your father can meet a demand for perhaps half a million in something more than a week."

"My father?"

"Yes; he is the guarantor, you know."

"I should think it is impossible that he can produce such a sum at such notice."

"Of course it is. Well, then, the Company will stop payment. Its other liabilities will bring up other creditors, and there is nothing to satisfy them with but the stock of iron which cost this fabulous sum, but which is now almost valueless——"

"Well, go on, Phil."

"Well, the Company will be put into liquidation, and its assets will be realised. Its assets will consist of the stock, and (since the shareholders have exhausted their liability) your father's whole fortune. That, Cosmo, is the sad way in which matters stand."

Cosmo sat down in sadness and bewilderment, and was silent for a time.

"I fear," he said at last, "this will utterly ruin my father. I have no idea what his fortune is; but I have reason to know that he has suffered great losses on the Continent lately, and, with £350,000 already locked up in the shares of this Company, if he can meet this immense demand at all, it will probably take his last available farthing to do so. My poor father! After his long life of work and anxiety to be beggared in this way! It is too cruel! Of course he will move heaven and earth to prevent the stoppage of payment, and if that madman Hopper had confessed to him a few weeks ago, he might probably have been able to do so; as it is, it appears to me hardly possible. What happened at the meeting? How did they take it?"

"Take it! You never saw men in such a

state. The chairman is only a sort of lay-figure, and had no control. Every one talked at the same time, and in the most violent language, but no one made any calm suggestions. There was an unreasonable disposition to attack your father. I am sorry to say Lord Germistoune used such expressions about him, that I was obliged to protest, and we had a regular passage of arms. Eventually the meeting was adjourned till to-morrow, so that your father might be present; and the only sort of conclusion which seemed to be arrived at was, to press him to the uttermost."

The two friends sat in long and melancholy discourse, which only ended in the conviction, that for each there was a certain grave calamity, which to-morrow's revelations could scarcely show to be lighter, and might probably prove to be still more disastrous.

CHAPTER LII.

The meeting took place at two o'clock on the following afternoon, and, before that time, some forty or fifty persons had assembled in the Company's Board-room. In addition to his indirect holding in the Company, Cosmo had taken shares, in his own name, to a moderate amount, and he was present with the other shareholders. He had gone early, hoping to see his father before the proceedings commenced; but at ten minutes past two, when the chairman had taken the chair, Mr Glencairn had not arrived.

The chairman was nervous and fussy. "I think," he said, "that until the arrival of Mr Glencairn, upon whom our action mainly depends, it will be useless to open the business of the meeting. I do not anticipate that he will keep us long waiting."

Hereupon Lord Germistoune rose and said, "I

desire to place upon record the distinct expression of my surprise, and, I may add, indignation, at the treatment to which Mr Glencairn is subjecting this Company. That gentleman, who is, at least, indirectly responsible for our painful position, has the discourtesy to keep a meeting waiting which, in my opinion, is entitled to expect a very different attitude on his part,—one of becoming humility, of an eagerness to explain, to——"

At that moment Mr Glencairn entered, erect and determined as usual, but with traces of anxiety and fatigue in his strong face. He bowed to the chairman, and took a seat opposite to Lord Germistoune, who continued on his feet, and went on :—

"Since the gentleman has arrived, it is unnecessary for me to do more than repeat, in his presence, that his conduct, in keeping this meeting waiting, is, in my opinion, a scandalous act of discourtesy. His position ought to dictate an attitude of humility and deference to the Company."

He sat down, and Mr Glencairn at once rose, displaying the same autocratic bearing as his assailant, made more effective, however, by the contemptuous curtness of his reply.

"I am sorry," he said, "that the meeting has been put to inconvenience. The explanation is simple. My train was delayed. I will only add that, in his remarks, the noble lord, either wilfully or from stupidity, misrepresents what he calls my 'position.'"

Lord Germistoune sprang to his feet. "Mr Chairman," he said, "if wilful misrepresentation is to be imputed——"

"I will retract that expression," said Mr Glencairn, surveying the angry peer with a look of sovereign contempt. "I cheerfully admit that I should have said misrepresentation from stupidity, without an alternative. I now move that we at once proceed to business."

The chairman then recapitulated the transactions of Mr Hopper, read over his statement, announced that vouchers proved the existence of the full amount of iron, but that the impending demands on them amounted to £750,000. The question, he said, was, how these liabilities were to be met. To him it appeared that the Company was almost without available resources. With an immense stock, it was practically insolvent. He sat down, looking at Mr Glencairn, upon whom all other eyes were hungrily fixed. Before

that gentleman had time to speak, however, Lord Germistoune was again upon his feet.

"There is," he said, "but one obvious resource. Mr Glencairn has had the impertinence to apply the word 'stupid' to *me*. I would tell him, however, that I am sufficiently acute to know that for all these liabilities *he* is liable; and that he is also now bound to refund to us the price of our shares—in a word, to take back his precious concern into his own hands, and restore to us the money which we were deluded enough to give him for it. I can assure him that we will submit to nothing less. Neither browbeating nor evasion will avail with this meeting. We will have no bogglings. Any attempt to boggle will be summarily repressed. Let him now declare how he proposes to relieve us; and let me again counsel him to employ a tone in keeping with his position."

Mr Glencairn then rose and said, "The noble lord's wordiness will, I think, be seen to justify my use of the epithet which he resents. Our business is, however, too grave to be impeded by such contemptible chattering. The matter stands briefly thus, and my position is this: I am the guarantor of the

Company — guaranteeing an annual dividend of nine per cent. On my failure to fulfil this guarantee, the shareholders are entitled to repudiate their contract with me, and to throw the business back upon my hands. That condition has not, as yet, arisen. I have fulfilled the guarantee, to my loss. Up to this time, then, the shareholders are not entitled to repudiate. To proceed. I admit my liability for the demands against the Company. If I meet them, our contract holds good. If I fail to do so, the shareholders will then, for the first time, be entitled to claim restitution of their purchase-money.

"By that time, however, the Company will be bankrupt (the liability of the shareholders being exhausted), and so shall I. My estate will be in liquidation, and the claims of individual shareholders upon it will be secondary to those which it will have to meet, on behalf of the Company, as a corporation. My assets, and those of the Company, could only now be realised at a ruinous sacrifice; and the chances are, that the shareholders would recover but a very small portion of their money. From this it appears, then, that you cannot at present legally repudiate, and that your true policy

is to prevent repudiation from becoming legal, under circumstances which would be detrimental to yourselves.

"Let us say that we have to meet, in ten days hence, a claim for £750,000. By any sort of operations, with our stock of iron, and from all the other resources of the Company, it would be sanguine to expect that more than from three to four hundred thousand pounds can be thus rapidly produced; the other moiety, or say £400,000, will therefore have to be contributed by me.

"The demand is large and sudden. Three hundred and fifty thousand pounds of my capital are locked up in this Company; my other resources are distributed in home and foreign undertakings—all suffering from grievous depression. Frankly, I doubt my ability to meet this demand, though no effort of mine shall be spared. I now move our adjournment for five days; at the end of that time I shall be prepared to state what I can do, and the Company will be prepared to say what, failing me, *it* is prepared to do. I would say no more, but Lord Germistoune's strange misconception of my position compels me to point out that it is I who am the great sufferer, and by no

fault of my own; that it is I who have a right to say to you—'By the neglect of your nominees—the directors—my whole fortune has been compromised and probably lost.'

"The noble lord says I was one of them. True; but how? Why, at your importunate request. You thought my name would inspire confidence, and you importuned me to remain on the Board, on the understanding that personal supervision was not to be expected from me, and that I was only to be referred to as an adviser in important matters. It is true I had confidence in the manager, who had served me for thirty years faithfully, but under supervision. I did not warrant him to you as a man who required no supervision. I would warrant no man in his position as such. If the directors, who signed away all this money, had had any proper prudence or sense of responsibility, they would not have sanctioned transactions which they did not thoroughly understand. If they had referred to me as an adviser, we should not be in our present situation. Lord Germistoune will perhaps now comprehend that humility is not the attitude which can be expected from me by the Company, but a very

different attitude indeed!" With these words Mr Glencairn left the meeting, over which silence prevailed for a moment, and then there burst forth a babel of wild talk, from which Cosmo escaped, and followed his father."

"My dear father," he said, warmly, "what can I say to you? what can I do to help you?"

"You need say nothing, Cosmo, and you can do nothing; for you know nothing of such matters. All that can be done must be done by myself personally—whether it will be availing or not, is another question."

"I trust you are more sanguine than your tone implies."

"Until I have seen certain bankers and brokers here, it is difficult to form an opinion."

"Shall you be long with them, do you think? When may I expect you at my rooms,—for, of course, you will stay with me?"

"Thanks; no. I must leave for Paris tonight. I shall put certain proposals before certain people here, and leave them for consideration. I shall then go to Paris with similar proposals."

"You won't be able to see my uncle, then, this time?"

"No, Cosmo. Tell him I am sorry not to do so, and sorry he is so poorly. It is impossible for me to stay, however. After all, it would be a melancholy time for our first meeting. Two old men—one threatened with death, the other with ruin! A week or two may make things better,—his health and my finance. Let us hope so. Good-bye."

CHAPTER LIII.

The succeeding week was one of deep anxiety, unhappiness, and suspense for Cosmo. In answer to several letters of inquiry, his father maintained an obstinate silence. He was terribly hard; he did not appear to value, or even to understand, sympathy: a sworn enemy to words which could not advance the business of the moment, he neither employed nor welcomed any graceful superfluities of language. Not that he was naturally an unkindly man; but concentration was the first instinct of his nature, and circumstances had directed its operation upon the dry facts of life, and warped it away from the domain of sentiment and the emotions. Cosmo very imperfectly understood his father, and was deeply pained by his reticence. The misfortunes of the latter and the manly imperturbability of his attitude before the meeting, had called forth all his son's

natural sympathy and captivated his admiration, and the "chill response of silence" with which his affectionate overtures had been met, disappointed his sensitive nature. From a practical point of view, also, his father's silence was distressing, for it prevented him from shaping his own course, in view of certain eventualities. To add to the misery of the situation, there was Lord Germistoune's unfortunate connection with the Company, and his embroilment with Mr Glencairn; so that, altogether, Cosmo was surrounded with clouds, and there was scarcely a speck of light on his horizon. Nor was it better with Esmè. By a sort of poetical equation of the burthens which true love has to bear, she had her fair share of the new distress. On the afternoon of the meeting, her father returned home in a state of positive frenzy. He loved money, and he saw much of his money in peril; he hated his adversary, and his adversary had brushed aside his assaults with contempt, and silenced him by his sturdy common-sense. Lord Germistoune did not like his wrath to boil over vaguely; he liked it to boil over so that it might scald and hurt some other person—no matter whom, no matter how innocent; and on this occasion Esmè was the

victim. When he entered the drawing-room where she was sitting, the expression of his face positively alarmed her.

"Papa!" she cried, "what is the matter? you look dreadfully ill."

"It is natural that a man should look ill, when he has first been robbed, and then outrageously insulted, by a swindling thief!"

"Robbed! insulted! By whom?"

"Oh, by some scoundrels *you* are deeply interested in—these infernal Glencairns!"

Esmè's colour and voice forsook her. She could only mutter, "I don't understand."

Then the old lord, incoherent with passion, went stammering on, "That Company of theirs —blown up—a million of money—all vanished —he puts his hand into my pocket, picks it of £20,000, and then tells me I am a contemptible chatterer! And *this* is the family you wished to marry into! By heavens, it's enough to make me disown you! Mercifully, they will be ruined, though. Curse them both! The blackguards! What? Why don't you speak?"

"I have nothing to say," said Esmè, in a faint voice.

"You might, at least, have the grace to say that you are sorry."

"I am sorry if you have lost money.

"And, I hope, sorry and ashamed that you ever had any sort of connection with such a crew. The very thought of the thing is maddening."

"Your accusation," said Esmè, with a powerful effort to control her voice, "is incomprehensible; but at least I know that Mr Cosmo Glencairn has nothing to do with the Company you speak of."

"Oh! you know that, do you? Good! ha! ha!"

"Yes, I know it. He told me."

"Better and better! You never heard of a secret accomplice, I suppose? He is as great a scoundrel as his father, I make little doubt."

"I cannot listen to this. I must leave you."

And she fled from the room to tears and desolation. For her there was another volume of grief and pain—another chapter of mystery, involving the dishonour of her lover's family; not *his* dishonour—that was impossible—but apparently his ruin and his ignominious connection with tarnished men. It was all vague and dark; but it was all wretched and horrible. Was there never to be an end of trouble? Could there be yet more dregs of bitterness in the cup which Love was forcing her to drink?

When Lord Germistoune had spoken as he had just done, he was really not responsible for his words. From his point of view, we must remember that there was really some ground for his *acharnement* against the Glencairns, who seemed destined to thwart him at every turn. We must also remember that he was unused to any sort of thwarting. So that his frenzy was accountable, and was the only palliation for his brutal words and cruel distortion of facts.

When he had cooled down a little, he remembered his injustice, with a certain shame and repentance, under the influence of which he went to Esmè's room. "My opinion," he said, "of the Glencairns is as low as can be; but I admit that, in my just anger, I have used expressions which went beyond the mark. Mr Glencairn's Company has been brought to the brink of ruin by the acts of his creature, for whose acts no one can acquit him of responsibility,—and—and though no fraud is proved against him personally, his conduct has been—is—outrageous and—and culpable, in the last degree. As for his son——" he paused.

"What of his son, papa?" asked Esmè, looking her father steadily in the face.

"I believe the son to be capable of anything;

but I will admit that his name was introduced by me, unnecessarily, upon this occasion.

"I do not require to be told that, papa."

"What! you are still dreaming of this fellow?"

"You wished to tell me, papa, that you had done him and his father injustice. I am very glad that you have told me so. But pray, pray, do not bring up more painful subjects. I cannot bear it; it is cruel; it is persecution!"

She threw herself down on the sofa, and hid her face: and her father, after wasting a few tempestuous words on ears that did not listen, went away in wrath and bitterness.

When the day to which the meeting had been adjourned came round, Mr Glencairn found that, in the existing stage of negotiations which were progressing in Paris, it was impossible for him to be present — which was at once announced by the chairman, who quelled a tumult which instantly arose, by stating that Mr Glencairn had addressed a letter to the shareholders which embodied all his views and proposals; and this letter, with the permission of the meeting, he now begged to read. It was dated from Paris, and ran as follows:—

"GENTLEMEN,—I regret that a maximum sum of £650,000 is all that I can hope to have at disposal for the satisfaction of claims, to the amount of £750,000, shortly coming due against the Company. The sum thus at disposal will be supplied by operations of one sort and another, with our stock of iron, which will yield no more than £250,000; and my own estate, partly by sales, partly by mortgages, will contribute (at a ruinous sacrifice) the complement of £400,000. From neither source can another farthing be extracted, in the present state of the markets. We are therefore short of our requirements by £100,000; and the shareholders must either be prepared to find that sum, or the bankruptcy of the Company, and of myself also, will be inevitable.

"In that double event, there would be a double liquidation, when many other claims would have preference to those of the shareholders; so that their loss would probably much exceed the amount which I suggest they should sacrifice, to keep the Company afloat.

"I have another alternative to propose, and it is this: that the shareholders should now dissolve their contract with me, and surrender their shares—the value of which (when the

value of my large holding is deducted from the capital of the Company) is £550,000.

"With this sum, as well as with the amount of the impending claims, I should then be debited, representing a total of £1,300,000.

"To meet this debit, I should have the sum, now at my disposal, of £650,000, and a further sum of £400,000, which, I have ascertained, can be procured by mortgage of the shares,—Total, £1,050,000, leaving a deficit of £250,000. The shareholders would certainly have to endure the temporary loss of that amount; but I think it would be their safer policy to do so. It will be observed that they would, in this way, recover a large portion of their capital, at once; and I do not think that I am sanguine in believing that such an improvement in the general conditions of finance and commerce must eventually take place, as would enable me to satisfy their remaining claims, by restoring the value of securities now mortgaged on the basis of grave depreciation.

"In weighing between these alternatives, the shareholders must bear in mind three of the results involved by bankruptcy :—

"1st, The shares would cease to be negotiable securities.

"2d, All assets of the Company's and of mine would have to be summarily realised.

"3d, There could not be a moment more unfavourable than the present for that operation.

"I leave you, gentlemen, to weigh these alternatives, and beg that your decision may be telegraphed to me here.—I have the honour to be your most obedient servant,

"A. GLENCAIRN."

As soon as the chairman had concluded his reading, an hysterical tumult arose, and the angry gabble of disappointed, money-loving men.

There had been great faith in Mr Glencairn's resources; and his failure was all the more enraging that it was unexpected. Little self-control was displayed. The few cool-headed men who essayed to speak were overpowered by cries of "Scandalous!" "An iniquity!" "A fraud!" "A plant!" "A robbery!" and so forth. The many hot-headed men, who had proposals to make, broke off in the midst of their words to join the chorus of wrath and execration.

Thus matters went on for a time, while Cosmo, white with disgust and anger, sat, hardly restrained by his own sound judgment, and by

the vehement remonstrances of Phil Denwick, from avenging, in a summary way, the grosser insults heaped upon his father.

By degrees the storm somewhat abated, and there was some show of discussion carried on, still noisily, by isolated groups.

At last one calm gentleman rose, and said that he would accept Mr Glencairn's statement as made *bonâ fide;* and move that his first suggestion should be adopted,—that they should put their hands in their pockets, produce £100,000, and float the Company. But he got no farther than this, being summarily hooted down. He was followed by another calm gentleman, who said that, when you were in a bad business, the best thing to be done was to get out of it, at once and altogether, even at a loss: he proposed, therefore, that they should adopt the second alternative, which would at once give them a large portion of their money, and might probably restore it all in time. There was a good deal of confusion upon this; some of the meeting supporting the speaker's view; the great majority, however, who were obviously "irreconcilables," hooted it as they had hooted the previous motion.

Last of all rose Lord Germistoune, who evi-

dently represented the popular sentiment, and was received with applause.

"He was not there," he said, "to discuss the *bona fides* of Mr Glencairn; that gentleman's character was a matter of indifference to him and them. He simply looked at the matter thus—by what line of action were they likely to incur the smallest loss? With regard to the first proposal, it was too preposterous to be considered by sane men, and he would pass it by. With regard to the second, he thought there was a certain effrontery in it. They were simply asked to give Mr Glencairn credit for £250,000 without any security. That was what it amounted to; and would the meeting stand that?"

The meeting shouted (here and there, with expletives) that it wouldn't; and his lordship went on.

"If they were to view it as a business proposal, it was at once audacious and puerile; if they were to regard it as an appeal *ad misericordiam*, he would suggest that Mr Glencairn had no claim to their consideration. He was their guarantor; and, holding that capacity, he had no right to compromise the soundness of his guarantee by engaging in a hotch-potch of speculations all over the world. He thought the

meeting would admit the justice of that homely expression?"

The meeting shouted that it did—that there was no sort of doubt about the hotch-potch.

"Very well, then," continued Lord Germistoune, "there could be no doubt about their attitude towards Mr Glencairn. Now that gentleman was obviously anxious to avoid the bankruptcies. That was natural. It was pleasanter to get indefinite credit for £250,000, than to have it summarily squeezed out of the pockets by the stern pressure of the law. As he had already said, he was not there to judge Mr Glencairn's *bona fides*, and he made no imputations against it; but he might venture to assert, in the abstract, that the scrutiny of a liquidator would detect capabilities in an estate, imperceptible to the—he would say, more languid—eye of an owner uncoerced. There was no doubt of it. Skilful liquidation operating firmly on Mr Glencairn's resources would produce a very different figure from this beggarly £400,000. He moved that matters be allowed to take their course, and that the bankruptcy of the Company and Mr Glencairn offered the solution most in accordance with the interests of the shareholders."

Twenty seconders sprang to their feet; a few dissentient voices were silenced; it was put to the meeting, received with boisterous acclamations, and the chairman had just said, "Lord Germistoune's motion being carried *nem. con.*——" when Cosmo rose and interrupted him.

"Before," he said, "the decision of the meeting is recorded, I desire to be heard; and when I say that I am Mr Glencairn's son, my claim to a hearing will be admitted. I am not going to follow the example set me by persons in this meeting, in the use of intemperate language, nor am I going to hold this meeting collectively responsible for the expressions of individuals in it —expressions used with reference to my father which can only be regarded as the ravings of a sordid panic.

"But now that something like sanity has been restored to the meeting, I challenge these individuals to rise and repeat these words to me, if they dare.

"In answer to Mr Glencairn's disinterested proposals, there have been shouts of 'Robbery!' and 'Fraud!' Has any one of his traducers the courage to stand up now and repeat these words to me, his son? I will give them time to collect their courage or their common-sense."

He paused: there was a dead silence, but no one rose. Cosmo continued—

"Their common-sense saves me the trouble of refuting them. By their own silence they admit themselves to be slanderers; and I will only say that those who treat the honour of a gentleman with so much levity, can have but an indistinct idea of what the honour of a gentleman really is.

"So much for the blatant members of this meeting; but I think that with a few exceptions, Mr Glencairn has good reason to complain of the treatment which he has received from this meeting as a whole. Let me contrast his attitude with that of you, the shareholders.

"He and you are parties to a contract made for your mutual benefit; but it proves damaging to both parties. Legally, he is bound to make good the damage; and he makes the most loyal efforts to so, without an attempt (which would be clearly justifiable) to escape or diminish his liability by pointing to your own culpable neglect which has been at the root of the whole evil. He produces a 'beggarly £400,000,' which it probably cost him a million to raise, and which it probably beggars him to produce. He makes no allusion to another £350,000 of his, sunk in the business

which you have ruined. His sacrifice is not less than a million; perhaps it is half as much again; but he makes no reclamations.

"He asks you, fifty men, to *risk* among you, what *is*, by comparison, a beggarly sum—and entirely for your own benefit. His arguments all turn upon your interests. He makes no appeal for himself. He effaces himself altogether. On the other side, what is your attitude? Why, it is that of Shylock clamouring for his pound of flesh! I have heard cries of 'Robbery!' and 'Fraud!' I have heard the pressure of the liquidator suggested as a force superior to the dictates of honour. I will not characterise such conduct. He has asked for nothing, except that you should help yourselves. Neither am I here to ask for anything for him. I will not even ask you to help yourselves; nor will I propose to you a compromise of any sort. Shylock shall have full satisfaction."

Here Lord Germistoune sprang to his legs, and said—"The meeting is, no doubt, willing to make some allowance for the violence of a young man upset by his father's distressing position; but he may rest assured that rhetoric will not affect the decision of this meeting. We are resolved that matters should take their

course. What we desire is our money, and not offensive parables. There is no more to be said."

"Lord Germistoune," said Cosmo, "will pardon me for contradicting him. There is still something to be said. Had I been aware of my father's inability to meet the full demand, I would have privately offered him such assistance as I could; but I have had no private communication from him. I regret that his reticence to me compels me to make a public exhibition of what ought to have been private and confidential between father and son. I have, however, no alternative. I place all that I have got at his disposal. I find that that amounts to £225,000, all fortunately in securities which can be at once realised. That is short by £25,000 of the sum required to annihilate the unfortunate connection between him and the Company; but my own holding in the Company, direct and indirect, amounts to £30,000, so that my property is sufficient, and even leaves a little margin. In my father's name, therefore, I now renounce the contract, and tender you your money in full. And now I agree with Lord Germistoune, that there is no more to be said."

Cosmo sat down; and, at first, there was a dead silence — the silence of astonishment. Then, from a variety of motives;—certainly joy for loss escaped, possibly recognition of Cosmo's generosity—applause burst from the meeting, which clapped its hands and rose and cheered him loudly. The shouts of "Robbery!" and "Fraud!" were replaced by "Generous!" "Splendid!" "Magnanimous!" His indignation and his bitter parable were at once forgotten.

When order was restored, one gentleman after another rose to express his high sense of Cosmo's self-sacrifice. It was an ovation which only threatened to be checked when a shareholder so far suffered enthusiasm to get the better of discretion as to suggest that the meeting should not allow all the sacrifice to be on one side, and proposed that, in acknowledgment of Mr Glencairn's loyal efforts, and his son's unexampled generosity, they should be invited to accept a return of £25,000; "otherwise," said the speaker, "I fear father and son will be entirely beggared. We know that the business can only be worked at a loss."

Before the meeting had time to discredit itself by a chill response to this, Cosmo again

rose and gratefully, but firmly, declined to accept the boon. "An act of the sort," he said, "to have any meaning, must be complete." And this drew forth the heartiest cheer of all. The shareholders had got every farthing of their money, and the danger of sentimental reaction had been comfortably overpassed.

When various business formalities had been completed, and when the meeting was about to break up, Lord Germistoune begged to detain them for a moment. A bitter struggle had been going on in his breast between his hatred for Cosmo, and certain embers of generous gentlemanhood which smouldered in his inner consciousness. The latter prevailed, and he rose and said—"The meeting, I think, ought not to separate without offering a formal vote of thanks to the gentleman who has relieved us from our embarrassments. Mr Cosmo Glencairn well knows that, for private reasons, his actions are not likely to be looked upon by me with a partial eye. It will therefore, perhaps, make the vote all the more acceptable to him, if I propose it, which I now do. His conduct has been distinctly that of a"—(a gulp)—"gentleman of honour and high spirit. I move that the meeting recognises this and thanks him."

The motion was carried by acclamation. Cosmo rose, and simply said, "I thank you, gentlemen, for your recognition that I have done my duty; and I thank Lord Germistoune for having, in my honour, performed a task which, I know, must have been unpalatable to him." And so it was all over.

Poor Phil, with tears in his eyes grasped both Cosmo's hands.

"Dear Cosmo," he said, "I am proud of you. It is glorious!"

"These is nothing glorious about it, Phil. If a man will not give his all to protect his father's reputation from even the possibility of misconstruction, he is not much of a man, in my opinion. Thank God, I had the money to give!"

"But you have sacrificed *everything*."

"Except honour and duty, Phil. I can, at least, look the world boldly in the face, like your old model 'The Blacksmith.' You and I are both young and strong; we must put our shoulders to the wheel, and hope for better days."

Cosmo telegraphed very fully to his father, and in the course of the evening received this reply—a marvel of length for Mr Glencairn:

"With your prospects and hopes, I was unwilling to involve you in my loss. You have made too great a sacrifice; but it shows you to be the best of sons and the best of gentlemen. I thank you. Prospects of the iron business very black, I fear. We shall both have to work hard. Take no steps till my return."

The excitement of the day had, to a certain extent, kept Cosmo up; but now all was over, and reaction set in. His father's telegram closed the sad drama; the final episode was complete, and his ruin was accomplished. Such an accumulation of calamities might well have bowed down the strongest man, and poor Cosmo touched the verge of desperation. It seemed that all was lost. His father's long life of work and enterprise had been lived in vain. His own dreams of love were fading away; his career of honour and usefulness was arrested at the very outset. He must resign everything and commence a life of obscure toil; and was there a hope to gild it?

He did not repent of what he had done; that he had so acted was his only consolation. The world might have called his sacrifice Quixotic; but to him it was a simple and inevitable duty. He did not repent of what he had done,

—but his heart wellnigh died within him. From a long and sad process of self-communion he rose to write, and when he had finished his task, he murmured sadly to himself, — "My first letter to her; and too likely to be my last!"

CHAPTER LIV.

That evening Lord Germistoune was in high good-humour. His £20,000 were safe. The Glencairns were ruined, and he felt that he himself had behaved like a Christian hero in wrenching from his grudging lips the few words in which he had acknowledged that the man he hated had done well. A larger nature would have felt some generous pain in profiting by the ruin of any enemy, and especially of one whose action had been so chivalrous. Lord Germistoune was not thus afflicted; he only felt that his own conduct in the affair had been as creditable, as its issue had been satisfactory, to his pocket. And not to his pocket only; for Cosmo was ruined now; the stepping-stone of wealth was knocked from beneath him; a pauper, and without *prestige*, forced to earn his bread in some obscure calling, he must now sink from the social orbit where contact with Esmè was

possible. At last she would see reason and recognise the stern logic of facts. Yes! at last the Glencairn "scandal" was at an end. His lordship was not vile enough to rejoice in the ruin of any one simply because he hated him; but, in this case, the ruin of the man he hated, crushed an influence which was opposed to his dearest wishes and hopes.

He was full of satisfaction, and, as he and Esmè were by themselves that evening, he thought he might as well now finally close the subject with her.

Under the circumstances he was able to speak of Cosmo in a tone of moderation which surprised his daughter at first, and even gave her a little flutter of unreasonable hope, soon to be dispelled.

"You will be glad to know, Esmè," he said, "that the matter I spoke of yesterday, with perhaps some little heat, has been adjusted."

"In what way, papa?" asked Esmè, nerving herself to meet another storm.

"In a very satisfactory way; I have secured my money."

"I am very glad to hear it; and—and Mr Glencairn, then, is quite exonerated?"

"Hum! well, I don't say that; but I am bound to say that his son has behaved in a man-

ner that was distinctly creditable to him. It surprised me, I admit; but I am always the first to own merit in cases where the ordinary run of men would allow personal feeling to blind them to its existence—ahem!"

"Yes, papa?—and ——" said poor Esmè, flushing with pleasure, and anxious to hear more from her father in this happy vein.

"Yes, I repeat that, to my surprise, the young man has behaved like a gentleman, and I must add, in a very high sense of the term—ahem!"

"Yes, papa? yes?"

"I say so with the less hesitation, that it is improbable I shall require to mention his name on any future occasion."

Clouds and darkness again!

"It happened in this way," continued his lordship: "the father was unable to meet our just claims; the bankruptcy of the Company was certain, and our heavy loss was inevitable. Upon this, the son stepped in voluntarily, and most properly, and enabled his father to do what was right. Young Glencairn paid us £225,000—a large sum."

"It must have ruined him!" gasped Esmè.

"Entirely so, I apprehend; indeed I almost think he implied as much."

"And you took his money, and ruined him? —ruined this noble life, that is so full of promise! and stopped his career, which has——oh, it is too horrible! How could you, papa?—how could you?"

"You forget, my dear," said Lord Germistoune, keeping his temper like a saint, "that, in business, such considerations are excluded. What were this young man's career and promise, and so forth, to the shareholders of the Company?"

"You might have declined your share."

"Ha! ha! my interest in his career is so affectionate! You astonish me, girl! However, you may make your mind easy; he would not have accepted it. At the first whisper of a proposal to recognise his upright conduct by a return of £25,000, he peremptorily declined it, with as much proper dignity, I am bound to say, as if he had been a gentleman."

"As if he had been a gentleman! as if the very facts did not *prove* him to be a gentleman of the very highest type!"

"I meant a gentleman by birth."

"Oh, that was all!"

"Yes; and now I think it will be well to come to a complete and final understanding

about this preposterous affair, which has been making a fool of you and me for months. This Mr Cosmo Glencairn was a plebeian before, and he is now also a pauper. My consent you never could have obtained, under the most favourable circumstances; and your own sense will show you that, even if I were to go mad and offer it, he would not now be in a position to take advantage of it. He is penniless; his father is practically the same, and will be bankrupt in a month, or I am much mistaken. Now, child, give up delusions. Take a rational and straightforward course,—best for yourself, and fairest to this unhappy young man, who now has to struggle with the world, and cannot afford to waste his energy on dreams;—take this course: write to him—I will even authorise you to do that, with, of course, the dignity and reserve proper to ladies in such circumstances—write to him and tell him that you see the hopeless folly of this entanglement. He knows it now himself; but he is a dreamer, and may have some high fantastic notion that he is pledged to you. Tell him that he is free; tell him there is no pledge, and that, if there ever was one, I dissolve it by my paternal authority. This will be the greatest kindness you can do him; it is the

only kindness I can sanction. I *will* sanction it, however, because he has behaved well in this money matter. Do it, then, and become once again my dear and dutiful daughter." Lord Germistoune quite astonished himself by the calm and noble elevation of his tone. Such mingled dignity and common-sense! such paternal sweetness and Christian philanthropy! He felt that he was becoming angelic and too good for this sinful world. "You will do it," he resumed, "*to-night.*"

"No, papa, I will not do it."

In an instant the seraph was transformed into a raving demon. Angels have fallen before. History repeated itself.

"You will *not* do it?" he shouted, and then atoned for his unnatural calm by a tornado of violent language. "You will *not* do it?" he repeated.

"I will *never* do it! I would far sooner die!" cried Esmè, the proud blood of the Douglas at last aflame beyond control.

"Leave my sight," cried her father, "and don't venture to approach me again to-night! Go, I say! Not a word, not a look, unless you wish me to turn you out of doors!"

Esmè walked proudly from the room; and if,

at that moment, Cosmo had stood by her side and said, "Come to the shelter of my love!" it is doubtful if filial duty would have said him nay.

As she went slowly up-stairs, a servant followed and gave her a letter. It was addressed in Cosmo's handwriting, and with a step magically quickened, she reached her room. In the hour of her bitterest trial, then, her lover's words had come to console her. A forbidden consolation! Forbidden? There are limits to human endurance, and these had been overpassed. She, too, was wellnigh desperate—this tender, loving soul, cast adrift in her agony, friendless, without a whisper of the sympathy which we all need, the hardest and strongest of us, in the hour of supreme affliction—cast adrift and all alone! No wonder she held the letter to her breast, and kissed it passionately, feeling, by its very contact, less alone; clasping it as the drowning cling to any waif in the horror and darkness of overwhelming seas. Hoarding her comfort, she thus stood for a long time, with the letter unread. At last, when the harvest of anticipation had been fully reaped, she opened it and read as follows :—

"I must write to you, my dearest, in spite of all prohibitions. Alas that my first letter should only have to speak of new sorrows! I need not go into details. I will simply tell you that, after my father had given, as I understand, his whole fortune to fulfil his obligations, it has been necessary for me to come forward with mine, to save him from calumny and persecution. Happily it has been in my power to do so effectually. But, dearest Esmè, it has cost me almost all I possess to do this—virtually *all;* and not merely money, for the loss of it closes my new career, and I must begin life at some lower level, far from the sphere in which you live. You know that wealth and fame appeared to me to be chiefly desirable, inasmuch as they might bring me nearer to you; and I think I could have endured to lose possession of the one and hope of the other with equanimity, but that their loss places an immensely wider gulf between us. Nevertheless, when the choice between duty and love presented itself, how could I hesitate? If I could have done so, surely my love would not have been worth your keeping; you would have justly despised it. I seem to hear your voice

assuring me of this. I write to you, darling, because it is right that you should know what has occurred directly from me, lest the surrender of my career, without apparent motive, should pain and bewilder you. It would, I suppose, be conventionally proper were I now to say that you must not, any longer, regard our betrothal as binding upon you. I cannot say so, however. I feel that to do so would be to wound and dishonour your love. Our troth was plighted 'for ever and ever.' While Time affects us, it binds our spirits together, for joy or sorrow, in hope or in despondency, in bodily separation or in union; and, in hope at least, we contemplate its perpetuation, after Time, for ever and for ever. Dearest, we have already suffered much. The future is dark. It may be God's will that we suffer much more; but faith and hope will support us, as they have done in the past. In the gloom of our night these stars are still shining, and they will shine on till the dawn comes. With our eyes fixed on them, let us wait in patience for the morning.

"What more can I say? My love can tell you nothing that you do not know already. It can ask you for nothing that you have not

already given. It can promise nothing that is not included in my undying devotion. Farewell, dearest Esmè!—I am your own for ever,

COSMO GLENCAIRN."

It was true that the letter told her nothing which she did not already know; it only placed before her, in calm sad words, the new aspect of their love and grief; but its influence, if not cheering, was, at least, soothing and strengthening. The steadfastness of Cosmo's tone, and the far-reaching scope which he pictured for their love, seemed, for the moment, to dwarf the dimensions of their present trials, and carried her eyes forward to a glowing future of union certain to come,—soon or late, but *certain* to come,—and then to last always, here and in those other realms where "the voice of weeping" shall not be heard. Her lover's letter bore her bravely up in that climax of her misery; but alas! such high contemplations will not, in real life, endure the strain of many a weary day. Beautiful are the Elysian plains, but far, far away; and, close beside us, there are other plains, with bloom and fragrance to touch our human

sense, and fill our human hearts with longing; and suffering human love cannot remain long content to stand on the passionless heights, and gaze upon the far horizons. "Love is of the valley." With all their fortitude and pious faith, the sufferings of these poor lovers were neither few nor small.

CHAPTER LV.

Mr Glencairn lingered in Paris, completing the transaction which had conveyed back into his own hands the wreck of his splendid business, and desperately endeavouring to discover in the locked-up remains of his fortune some symptoms that these might, by-and-by, yield a little assistance towards restoring the capabilities of the undertaking. He wrote to Cosmo that he was thinking out a scheme for him, but that it was not yet in a practical shape; and earnestly counselled him to retain his seat in the House, at all events till the end of the session. "The surest way to make ruin irretrievable is," he said, "to acknowledge it. Your retirement now, would simply be to advertise it." Cosmo's future plans thus remained in abeyance, and he had to endure an irksome suspense, instead of plunging into the abyss and sounding its lowest depths, which instinct

prompts us to do when inevitable calamity is impending.

Hopper wrote, from his "so-to-speak" seclusion, several letters of grotesque but probably sincere regret for the ruin his madness had induced. He offered to Mr Glencairn his services in the working of the firm for the term of his natural life, gratuitously, or, "if he might so say, for a crust." Failing this, he was, he said, prepared, on the same terms, to become Mr Glencairn's bondsman, enumerating a vast variety of services which he would "greedily render," and which included the hewing of wood, the drawing of water, the blacking of boots, the breaking of stones, and other menial duties proverbially associated with penitence and retribution. Mr Glencairn vouchsafed no answer to any of these tempting offers.

The story of Cosmo's ruin and generosity got abroad, and meandered through Clubland in various aspects of transformation. It was filtered to the profane public through the omniscient columns of the weekly "socials" thus, and in similar parables: "History has been repeating itself! Pious Æneas has been carrying poor old Anchises off upon his shoulders again, but he has tumbled this time under the paternal

fardel, and smashed his knees. I hear he is likely to become Prime Minister to the Pijwam of Namboo, who, *on dit*, owes Anchises a pretty handsome penny."

So that society knew as much about Cosmo's misfortune as he knew himself, and was altogether ahead of him in regard to his future career; but his calm exterior and continued attendance at the House puzzled the hungrier gossips who have appetite for more than a nine days' wonder, and his reserve repelled the questions and the sympathy of all save his nearest intimates, who were very few in number. Among these, of course, by the eternal law of contrast, was Tom Wyedale, whose disinterested regrets were pointed by many personal considerations.

The moment he heard the ill news, he went down to the "Kakodæmon," and summarily borrowed £150 from Bobus Packer, who had recently been elected a member, in consideration of his half a million of money, which had been held to cancel certain social disabilities under which Bobus laboured. Thence repairing to the "Gastronomic," he similarly levied upon another *nouveau riche*, who had lately been admitted as a Gastronomer under similar con-

ditions of generous forbearance, and with the £300 thus amassed, he betook him to Cosmo's rooms. After expressing the heartiest grief and sympathy, he proceeded to say, "It has only just occurred to me, my dear Cosmo, that I have been in your debt for more than a year. I daresay you've forgotten all about it; but at Cadenabbia, last summer, I borrowed £280 of you, and it would be monstrous in me to keep you out of it a moment longer now; so here it is for you, with many thanks and apologies."

"This is very thoughtful of you, Tom," said Cosmo. "I have not yet realised what it is to be poor; but, of course, I know I ought to take it. Still you are always in straits, and if this is too heavy a draw upon you, you can keep the money for the present."

"No, no, Cosmo," cried Tom, "I insist. Make your mind easy; the difference it will make to me is quite trifling." Which was really very true, Tom's little temporary profit on the transaction being only twenty pounds—represented by the excess of Bobus and Co.'s contributions over the sum now tendered to his friend.

"Very well, then, I'll take it. Thank you, Tom; you are a good, kind fellow," said Cosmo. And Tom really fancied he was. "Deuced hard,"

he thought to himself, "if I were to let a little false delicacy stand between poor Cosmo and his money. Cosmo is more to me than many thousand Bobuses, and I was clearly bound to make some sacrifice of pride on his behalf. And, after all, if these bloated snobs are not to pay *something* for the privilege of coming among us, why admit them? What becomes of reciprocity?"

CHAPTER LVI.

During all this time, Sir Robert Glencairn had been steadily declining in health and strength, and, all this time, Cosmo had been most dutiful in his attentions, visiting him daily, and when the financial catastrophe occurred, carefully keeping the knowledge of it from his uncle, lest, in his feeble state, the intelligence should injuriously affect his health.

Mr Glencairn, however, frustrated his son's thoughtfulness. Perhaps affliction had somewhat softened the former; at all events, about ten days after the explosion, he wrote to his brother expressing regret that he had been unable to see him before he left England; fully explaining the causes which had taken him abroad, and which were still likely to detain him for some time upon the Continent, and reporting, in warm terms, Cosmo's fine act of self-sacrifice. The results of this sudden dis-

closure were as serious as Cosmo had feared they might be. Fiery and autocratic, Sir Robert had, at the same time, a large substratum of simplicity and affection in his nature; and his only brother's calamity caused him infinite distress. Then, though his own high spirit sympathised with Cosmo's act of devotion, it appeared to him to threaten something like the final disappointment of what had been, almost to monomania, the aspiration of his life. On the occasion of Cosmo's first visit after the disclosure, he found his uncle in an alarming state of prostration. He spoke slowly and with difficulty; all his brusque eccentricity had left him; he was pathetically subdued and gentle. He handed to Cosmo his father's letter, saying, "You will see from this that I know all." Cosmo glanced his eye over the letter, and then said: "I am grieved, uncle, that you should have had this trouble intruded upon you when you are so unwell. I concealed it from you purposely."

"You are a very good fellow, Cosmo," was the reply; "but why should I not suffer with my own kith and kin? I have been a lonely man all my life, and, I fear, a selfish one. The end of my life is very near; during what

remains of it, it is well that I should share, in all things, with my family. I have saved a little money; *that* and my pension, your father and you will share with me while I live,—not for business purposes, but for your personal wants. I have made my will, and left you my small fortune. I have settled it so that you cannot again sacrifice yourself to your generosity; not that I blame you for what you have done—God forbid I should do that! If your father is in need of money, you will, I know, give him what he requires, out of the income, just as I will do myself while I live. Ah, Cosmo, I fear all our investigations are hopeless now! Nevertheless I wish you to continue in Parliament, if possible, where, I think, you will do credit to our pedigree, short or long. Besides, something *may* yet turn up, who knows? and, in any case, and on every account, I wish you to be in a position to which you are entitled. I cannot help seeing, in your recent conduct, another strong piece of internal evidence. The money I have to leave is only about £25,000. I don't make obedience to my wish a condition of inheriting it; but, if you find it practicable, I *do* wish you to follow out a political career. Will you?"

"If it is at all practicable, uncle, I shall certainly respect your wishes, which are quite in unison with my own."

"I have a fancy," continued the old man, "that I should like to be buried in Scotland. It is, at all events, our fatherland. You will respect that wish too?"

"You are low to-day, uncle, and depressed; don't let us talk of such lugubrious subjects. I hope it will be many a day before that wish has to be considered."

"But you will remember it?"

"How can you doubt it?"

"And, if the discovery ever should be made —if the home of our race is ever identified—I should like to think that my ashes will be removed, so that they may mingle with those of our ancestors. You may think this an idle whim—the caprice of a dying man; but depend upon it, it is the instinct of long descent which prompts the wish; and you will respect it also?"

"I will, uncle," said Cosmo, wondering at the tenacity with which this fixed idea clung to the old man's brain, under all circumstances of discouragement.

"I am tired now," continued Sir Robert,

"and I think I could sleep; so I will not ask you to stay longer to-day. But be sure you come to-morrow. You are a very fine fellow, and have been a great comfort to me. Good-bye, and God bless you."

The next morning, before Cosmo was dressed, his uncle's servant came to his rooms.

"Sir Robert has had a very restless night, sir," he said, "and he is very weak this morning. The doctor desired me to say he thinks you ought to come as soon as possible. He considers that Sir Robert is sinking very fast."

Cosmo made all haste, and was soon at his uncle's chambers. The doctor met him at the bedroom door, and detained him outside for a moment. "Your uncle," he said, "has had a slight paralytic stroke; but, in his reduced condition, I can hold out no hope that he will rally from it. In fact, I fear that he will not survive the day."

"Is he conscious? Will he know me?" asked Cosmo.

"It is hard to say; but I am afraid it is certain that he will never speak to you again."

They entered the room. The poor old man lay very still; his breathing was quick but

faint; one arm lay powerless by his side; his other hand twitched the bedclothes with aimless persistent restlessness, and his open eyes had that look, half vague, half solemn, of appeal or inquiry which accompanies the approach of death. He slightly moved them in the direction of those who entered, showing that he was still or again conscious. His nephew bent over him, and taking his hand, said, "Do you know me, dear uncle?" His eyes were turned upon Cosmo's with the same vague look of appeal, but he neither spoke nor made any sign.

"Can nothing be done?" asked Cosmo.

"Nothing," said the doctor. "He is without suffering; that is all the comfort I can give you; but it is unnecessary that I should remain." He felt the dying man's pulse, and added—"A very few hours more!"

Cosmo sat down by the bedside to wait for the end. All through the day his vigil lasted. His uncle was little more than a stranger to him, and his own nature was not prone to rapid expansions, so that violent grief could not be expected of him. But there was much that was touching in this lonely close of a life which the dying man had himself described as lonely—in this desolate end to aspirations which he had

cherished so feverishly, but a few short weeks before; and, with this moving spectacle before him, Cosmo's heart was stirred to genuine compassion. In the long hours of solemn thought, while his uncle's vitality ebbed gradually away, his own special calamities faded, for the time, out of sight. By degrees his mind passed to larger contemplations of the pathos of human life and the vanity of human wishes, and then rose to that higher sphere of hope whence the eye of Faith descries, for the shortness and sadness of life, a recompense on the farther side of Time—

"Where, beyond these voices, there is peace."

Thus the day passed. Towards evening Cosmo felt his uncle's hand tighten its grasp on his own, and, looking at him, saw that the expression of his eyes had changed to one of anxious meaning and intelligence; and, at the same time, he was obviously making an effort to articulate. His nephew bent down close to him; but, for some time, he could collect no sense from his murmurs, reiterated over and over again, in a faint and hollow monotone. At last he caught the word "Bible," and, looking round, saw, on the table near the bed, the old pocket Bible which Phil Denwick had given to Sir

Robert. Imagining that his uncle wished him to read from it, he took it up; but again his hand was pressed, and again the dying man resumed his painful attempts to speak, and at length succeeded in audibly pronouncing the word "heirloom."

"You wish that this Bible should be preserved as an heirloom in our family?" said Cosmo, speaking with slow distinctness. The old man pressed his hand by way of assent, and Cosmo assured him that his wish should be sacred. His grasp then relaxed, he made no further effort to speak, and his eyes resumed their former vague expression. Another hour passed, and then the light faded from them, suddenly and for ever.

It was late when Cosmo returned to his own rooms that night. The events of the day had been saddening, the tension had been protracted, and he was worn out and thoroughly depressed. In this condition, when his own affairs again recurred to his thoughts, the death of his uncle appeared to bear upon his destiny with a very different significance from that which it really possessed. As a matter of fact, it clearly benefited Cosmo, by opening to him the inheritance of, at least, a modest compet-

ency. But he had not, as yet, realised what the importance of this was. He had never known poverty, and his descent into it was, as yet, only felt by anticipation, and exclusively in its relation to the disappointment of certain dearest wishes. Under these circumstances, what are called "worldly considerations" were not included in the view which he took of his uncle's death. That event simply appeared to him to be another element in the general desolation which was closing around him—the severance of another link, frail and shadowy as it was, which connected him with the idea of a hope, now rapidly vanishing. He felt terribly alone. His heart had learned, by the experience of love, to long with intensity for sympathy and tenderness; but, upon the mountainous obstacles which already intervened between him and Esmè, another mountain had lately piled its bulk. As for his father, he was cold and self-sufficing; and even when Cosmo's heart had gone forth to him, in the hour of mutual calamity, its advances had been chilled by silence or by words of formal reciprocity.

The death of this old man, then,—of this old man whom he might have learned to love, and whose nature was far more in sympathy with

his own,—simply seemed, as we have said, to add another drop to the cup of his desolate loneliness, which was already full to the brim.

Love, family ties, wealth, fame, ambition, the eager wish to stand in the fore-front of the battle for everything which makes nations great and good—over all these the dark waters of destiny seemed to pour their obliterating tide. A weariness, a sickness of life, took possession of him; he declined from the high level of Christian stoicism on which he had passed his vigil in the death-chamber. The words of inspiration brought him no comfort; only such as were darkest came to the darkened chambers of his soul, which echoed with the dreary questions of the Man of Uz, with the despairing summations of the mournful Preacher: "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery? and life unto the bitter in soul?" "All the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me; for all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

He had brought away his uncle's Bible—the heirloom; it lay upon the table before him, and he took it up and opened it. On the fly-leaf he beheld the motto, "Search the Scriptures," and he turned over the pages, searching in them for

the key-note of some happier strain of thought. At last he lighted on a striking passage, which suggested a long train of speculation, ending in a reverie; and, in the midst of this, the Bible slipped from his absent hand and fell to the ground. It fell open, with its leaves downward, and Cosmo hastily stooped and picked it up. The leaves were deranged by the accident, and he was readjusting them when his eye was attracted by some faintish writing upon one of the central pages. With only a languid interest, he approached the light to decipher the words, which were written on the blank side of the title-page of the New Testament. They were as follows :—

"Whereas I, the Honourable Norman Douglas, third son of Archibald, 12th Baron of Dunerlacht, have married you, Jean Lothian, on this first day of June 1781, in the parish of Greyfriars, in Edinburgh, under the name of Norman Glencairn; and whereas you have doubts and scruples whether this wedlock be true and fast, being contracted under a name assumed by me, but not registered—I do now, therefore, before God and upon this His Holy Book, formally take and acknowledge you to be my wife, under the name of Norman Douglas.

This name I have abjured and renounced, and I now retake, and use, and admit it to be my name, solely for this one occasion and purpose: *videlicet* — to satisfy your conscience and scruples, and to assure you of my leal faith in all ways. To this I place my signature— NORMAN DOUGLAS or GLENCAIRN."

Underneath, the anxious wife had made assurance doubly sure by writing :—

"For the second time, this 1st June 1781, I, Jean Glencairn or Lothian, take you, Norman Glencairn, to be my husband, and now under your lawful name of Norman Douglas; and I sign my name—JEAN DOUGLAS or GLENCAIRN or LOTHIAN."

A mist came before Cosmo's eyes, and the beating of his pulses sounded in his ears like the roar of many waters or the shouting of a vast multitude. For a few seconds he was virtually unconscious; and though, when he had somewhat recovered his self-possession, he read and re-read the startling revelation, it was only after much time that he had anything but a confused sense of what it imported. At first he appeared to be watching the evolution of a romantic mystery, which in no way concerned him. The very identity of Norman Douglas

with his own progenitor Norman Glencairn he could only realise with difficulty; and when that was done, he could hardly retain fixed in his conviction that he himself was transformed into Cosmo Douglas.

Then — "Douglas," "Dunerlacht," "Douglas!"—he repeated the names over and over again, with a stupefied air, as if trying to recall some association with the words which was eluding the grasp of his memory. Such a sudden and utter revolution in regard to all the leading ideas and interests of his life, might well bewilder him, and make it a matter hard to his apprehension, that he himself shared the proud lineage which Lord Germistoune had so haughtily described as placing an impassable barrier between Esmè and a suitor of obscure origin. With the minute history of the Dunerlacht family he was not familiar; though he did remember that Lord Germistoune was also 15th Baron Dunerlacht; but in what degree of relationship he himself, as descendant of the 12th Baron, thus stood to the present representative of the family, he was not aware.

It could not, however, be remote; but, near or remote, the lineage and blood were the same. At last, from all confusions and bewilderments,

this supreme fact shone before his eyes. The dawn had begun to break at last. A world of delight opened before his eyes. The grand obstacle of birth had ceased to separate him from Esmè; the contemptuous disregard to which defects of origin had exposed his own personal qualities was no longer possible. For his love there was blissful hope; for his pride, which chafed against the obliteration of individuality by a social brand, there was a sovereign balm. Hard to realise all this; hard to believe in so comprehensive a transformation: but, once grasped, it may well be imagined that, for a time, all other sublunary considerations faded out of view. A time which was of long duration; for, all night through, Cosmo paced his room, turning, again and again, from one to another of the new aspects of his life, and finding, at each recurrence, some accession of delight. It was only when the cold natural dawn stole into his chamber that a check was given to the warmth of his enthusiasm; and then, from a hundred Alnaschar-like dreams, he awoke.

It was much for him to find that he was of noble birth; the distinction was dear to him from many points of view: but the cold voice

of the dawn asked him, whether the discovery did, after all, remove every obstacle to his hopes? And the answer, alas! could be but this — that the removal of one disability had been anticipated by the substitution of another. A month ago he possessed the advantage of wealth cancelled by obscurity of birth, and now his faultless lineage was neutralised by poverty.

However much Lord Germistoune might recognise the abstract virtue of a pedigree, which he, of all men, could not possibly undervalue, that, by no means, involved his admission that a comparatively penniless cadet of the family could be considered a suitable match for the daughter of the chief—for the heiress of the family honours and possessions. He felt all this now; and though there was still much to be thankful for, he bitterly appreciated the irony of Fate.

Next, with a pang of shame and remorse, he remembered his uncle — all thought of whose death had been swept from his mind by the very discovery which the poor old man had longed and hoped and worked for, all his life. He remembered that for his uncle, too, the irony of Fate was cruel—more cruel than in his

own case, from the apt moment of its development and the conclusiveness of its action. Bitterly reproaching himself, he was touched by that remorseful desire to atone to the neglected dead, which often moves men to pay an instant and more reverent obedience to the last wishes of those who have gone. He recalled his uncle's last injunctions; he had expressed but two. Of these there was little fear that that which referred to the Bible would be neglected; little fear that *it* would cease to be an heirloom in the family, the charter of whose resuscitation had been drawn from its sacred guardianship.

His uncle's other wish—that he should be laid to his final rest among the ashes of his forefathers, if the place of their sepulture ever became known—he now resolved to take immediate steps to carry into effect.

To do this, it was necessary that he should, at once, apprise Lord Germistoune of the kinship between their families, which had been so strangely brought to light. Before he lay down, therefore, he wrote the following letter to his lordship—writing, as may be imagined, with a haste and agitation which excluded the consideration of minute details :—

"25*th July* 18—.

"My Lord,—I have to announce to you the death of my uncle, Sir Robert Glencairn (properly Douglas), which took place last night, at his chambers in Pall Mall, after a few weeks' illness. His death has been immediately followed by a discovery, of vital interest to me, and which cannot be altogether indifferent to you. It has transpired, beyond doubt, that our family name is Douglas, and that we are entitled to it in right of our descent from Norman Douglas, otherwise Glencairn, who was third son of Archibald, twelfth Baron Dunerlacht. The discovery is not many hours old, and I have had no time to ascertain in what exact degree of relationship it proves my late uncle to have stood to your lordship. That it must be pretty close, however, is obvious; but, even had it been very remote, I would still have ventured to trouble you with this letter. The day before his death, my uncle, who had, all his life, entertained the strongest desire to penetrate a mystery in which our origin was involved, expressed to me the wish that, should it ever be cleared up, he might, if it were possible, be interred in the burial-place of our ancestors. That wish is, of course, sacred to me; and I feel

confident that so natural an aspiration will recommend itself to your lordship's sympathy, and that you will be glad, as chief of the family, to grant the sanction, and give the directions, which will enable me to carry it into effect. To ask for this is my sole object in now writing to you. This is not the occasion to allude to other bearings of the discovery; but I cannot be wrong, I think, in expressing a hope that, whatever difference has unfortunately existed between us, your lordship will see nothing in my past conduct which can discredit my present request, by making you ashamed to recognise my kinsmanship.—I have the honour to be your lordship's obedient servant, Cosmo Douglas (formerly Glencairn)."

Cosmo then wrote a second letter to his father announcing the discovery which had been made shortly after the despatch of a previous one, in which he had reported his uncle's death. He also explained the step which he had consequently taken with regard to the funeral, and begged his father to return at once, if it were at all practicable. When his writing was finished he lay down to rest, but not before the sun had long been up.

CHAPTER LVII.

If the proverbial thunderbolt had fallen through the roof of Lord Germistoune's business-room, it could hardly have produced a more agitating effect upon the noble occupant than did the perusal of Cosmo's letter. In the former case, however, it would have been the agitation of fear; in this, it was simply wrath, but wrath intensified to such a pitch that it almost paralysed the patient. He sat glaring at the letter, livid, trembling, and speechless. We have seen him in not a few transports of the sort, but only of the sort; for this, in degree, probably surpassed any previous passion which had fired the combustible spirit of the old gentleman. "Glencairn! Glencairn! Glencairn!" were the first words he uttered, after a long interval of dumb frenzy; and then, his voice being again available, he poured forth such volleys of miscellaneous malediction as

proved the perfection to which the art of cursing may be brought, if a long life is conscientiously devoted to its culture. This Glencairn family appeared to him, in his present mood, to be some emanation from the infernal regions, let loose for the express purpose of outraging and exasperating Viscount Germistoune; and a long list of their persecutions was crowned by this last supreme act of almost impious audacity. One of them had wounded his dignity by personal slight and insult, and placed large moneys of his in grievous jeopardy. The other had practised upon his daughter with diabolical arts of love, ensnared her affections, perverted her obedient spirit, and lifted his own daring eyes to an alliance with the august house of Germistoune. It might have been supposed that this would exhaust them; but no! the Glencairn pertinacity in evil and torment, was a very Hydra—defeated at one point, it rose rampant at another. The attempt on his money (he put it thus) had miscarried; he had foiled the matrimonial design, at the expense of grievous personal annoyance, trouble, and anxiety; and now, here was a deliberate scheme to degrade that which was, in his eyes, most sacred of all, by boldly advancing a claim

to kinsmanship! What sort of a claim? founded upon what? Why, on the ground of their descent from a blackguard waif of the family, whose debaucheries had been notorious, — a claim which might, no doubt, be made with equal justice by swarms of similar descendants, born, under hedges or in workhouses, of nameless and degraded mothers. By heavens! this was getting past all bounds of human patience! Burial too! burial among the hallowed dust of the Douglases, for the illegitimate bones of this infernal old Indian impostor! Lord Germistoune felt that it was almost a case for the police; and, at all events, that if justice had anything to do with the moral government of the universe, something must happen to these vampires before long.

Hours elapsed before he was calm enough to write in the strain of awful but judicial severity which he believed to be his *forte;* and then he indited the following response to Cosmo:—

"——, *July* 18—.

"Sir,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, announcing the death of a person whom you describe as 'Sir Robert Glencairn

(properly Douglas),' and requesting that the privilege of interment in my family burying-ground may be accorded to his remains.

"It seems improbable that you should have been distraught by grief, on account of the death of the individual in question; but, either from that, or some other circumstance, I presume you to have been suffering from mental alienation at the moment when you permitted yourself to pen that monstrous effusion. On no other hypothesis can I account for it.

"It seems almost a waste of words to negative a request of the sort; but, as it is preferred in a serious tone, I pay it the compliment of a grave refusal. And, when I have done so, I have said all that is strictly necessary; but I will, nevertheless, add one or two brief observations. You have displayed, on a recent occasion, the spirit of a gentleman, which I cheerfully recognised at the time; and if the same spirit continues in some degree to actuate you, you will, I think, see the propriety of discontinuing the use of the name which you appear to have adopted,—only, let me hope, in the moment of frenzy with which I have above credited you. Admitting the possibility of

your illegitimate descent from a member of my family who disgraced it and himself, let me point out that the etiquette which guides men of good feeling in your position prompts them to adopt the name, not of the male, but of the female parent or progenitor, from whom an irregular and discreditable origin is derived. The law, I believe, without recognising the *right* of persons in your position to any name at all, sanctions in some sort of way, or perhaps I should say connives at, their adoption of the female surname. I know not whether the name of 'Glencairn' were adopted on this principle; but, if that were not the name borne by your irregular progenitrix, I would suggest that you should now discard it—not for the name of Douglas, but for that of the female in question, which, if she were at any time within the pale of ecclesiastical discipline, may probably be preserved in the disciplinary records of the parish where she lived. This would be to place yourself in, at least, a *quasi* legal position. Be that as it may, persistence on your part in the assumption of the name of Douglas might possibly compel me to expose the impertinence in the public prints; and I shall do so, without fail, if it ever comes to my knowledge that you venture

to impute to me the scandal of kinsmanship with yourself.—I am your obedient servant,

"GERMISTOUNE.

"*P.S.*—A more monstrous pretension was, perhaps, never before advanced."

Cosmo did not receive this notable effusion till late at night, and he answered it on the instant.

The next morning Esmè happened to reach the breakfast-room before her father made his appearance, and, while awaiting his arrival, she took up the advertisement-sheet of the 'Times,' and read in the obituary list an announcement which interested, but much perplexed her. It ran as follows:—

"At his chambers, in Pall Mall, on the —th inst., in the 65th year of his age, Sir Robert Douglas (formerly Glencairn), K.C.S.I., late commissioner of Sirapoore, Bengal; great-grandson of Archibald, 12th Baron Dunerlacht."

When Lord Germistoune entered, Esmè, with the paper still in her hand, exclaimed, with a vivacity now unusual in her dealings with her father—

"Oh, papa, we seem to have lost a relation I never heard of before. It is very strange."

"What do you mean?"

"There is the death of a Sir Robert Douglas, formerly Glencairn, announced here."

"Is every one who chooses to call himself 'Douglas,' *necessarily* a relation of ours?"

"No; but he is described as great-grandson of Archibald, 12th Baron Dunerlacht. What does it mean, if he were not our relation?"

"Mean? It means an imposition—a swindle—a lie; that's what it means."

"But who *was* this Sir Robert Douglas in reality?"

"Ah! read his *alias*."

"Glencairn," said Esmè, utterly bewildered.

"Yes, 'Glencairn;' you have some reason to blush when you read it."

"But—but——"

"He was brother to the man who tried to fleece me of my money; he was uncle to the individual who has virtually robbed me of my daughter's loyalty and affection; he was a third scoundrel of the same accursed gang."

"This is cruelly unjust, papa."

"Be silent! What new villany have they started now? Why, a claim to kinsmanship with me—with *me!*—on the ground of an alleged illegitimate descent from a blackguard cadet of our family! And not content with

that, this Mr Cosmo Glencairn completes a long series of outrages by calmly requesting me to admit my 'kinsman' (the reprobate just defunct!)—to admit him to the right of burial among the old lords of Dunerlacht! By heavens! it's enough to make the old lords get up and leave the vaults in disgust! But I daresay you'll defend it. Upon my life, I think you will! Do you? Do you dare? What? Answer me!"

"I think it is natural to wish to be buried among one's own people," said Esmè, speaking like one in sleep, and from the midst of some wild and wondrous dream. Before her father had time to open new vials of wrath upon her, a servant entered and brought him a letter, addressed in a handwriting which caused his lordship to pause and hastily tear it open. It was Cosmo's letter, and Lord Germistoune tore it open with a sort of gluttonous desire to stimulate his ferocity with some new incentive. He was apparently disappointed. Certainly the letter, which ran as follows, did not produce this effect, but indeed a strangely different one:—

"——, *July* 18—.

"My Lord,—I do not think it would be seemly in me to protract a controversy as to

the burial of my uncle, Sir Robert Douglas. I will therefore make other provisional arrangements for his interment, and I have, on that subject, no farther remarks to offer.

"As to the general tone and tenor of your letter, I feel that, though they are offensive, I am not logically entitled to resent them, since they are based on a misconception of facts so great that they are virtually not addressed to me at all, but to a non-existent person.

"Absolute proof of my legitimate descent from Norman Douglas is in my possession; and no strong asseverations will discredit it. Let me add that (failing my father's action in the matter), I shall anticipate your action as to publicity, by at once advertising my resumption of our family name—of which your lordship may be assured that I am as proud as yourself —and the advertisement will report the evidence which justifies the resumption. I shall thus place myself, not, to use your own expression, 'in a *quasi* legal position,' but in the only position tolerable to a gentleman, who considers that the fair fame of his progenitors ought to be sacred in his eyes.

"Your lordship will, of course, see in the advertisement the evidence above alluded to,

but I need not say that, should you wish to examine the originals, or the certified copies from marriage registers, &c., they are open to your inspection. At the same time, any attempt on your part to discredit the legality of my resumption of the family name, will compel me, with regret, to have recourse to legal measures for redress and refutation.—I have the honour to be your lordship's obedient servant,

"Cosmo Douglas."

By the time Lord Germistoune had finished reading the above, every vestige of colour had left his face. He folded up the letter with hands that shook as if palsied, and sat down to the breakfast-table, touching the articles about him in an absent mechanical way, while his features worked spasmodically.

His daughter was anxiously observing him, when he rose and staggered, rather than walked, towards the door. Esmè sprang up and ran to him with a cry of alarm.

"Papa! dear papa! what is wrong? let me help you—let me——"

He turned on her with a ghastly face and wild eyes, and waved her off, muttering, "Don't dare to follow me!"

CHAPTER LVIII.

A FEW hours after Lord Germistoune's breakfast had been disturbed by the arrival of Cosmo's letter, Tom Wyedale was leisurely enjoying the same meal at his club; and, in the intervals of gossiping with other breakfasters, he glanced at a newspaper which was conveniently propped upon the table in front of him. Presently his eye fell on the announcement of Sir Robert Glencairn's death, which had perplexed Esmè, and which now, almost as much, bewildered Tom. "Cosmo's uncle, of course," he thought to himself. "There can't have been two Sir Robert Glencairns living in the same rooms in Pall Mall; but, hang it! why 'Douglas'? and how 'great-grandson of the 12th Baron Dunerlacht'? Either poor Cosmo has, at last, gone mad, or some fiend has been playing a practical joke on him—to make yet more mischief between him and old Germistoune. Yes, that must be

it. A woman, of course. It's too bad: upon my life it *is* too bad!"

When Tom had finished his breakfast he went up-stairs to the library, and attentively studied the history of the Germistoune-Dunerlacht family, in Burke's Peerage. After which he decided to go and call Cosmo's attention to the obituary notice. "He must take *some* notice of it," he said to himself; "malicious chaff of that sort ought to be jumped upon heavily."

A very few minutes brought Tom to his friend's room, and, saddening his face, discreetly, to suit the occasion, he entered. Cosmo was busily writing, but looked up and bade his visitor "good morning." "I won't stop an instant," said the latter, "if you are too much occupied."

"To tell you the truth, Tom, I am excessively busy. Perhaps you could come back, by-and-by?"

"Certainly; but I have just half-a-dozen words to say, which won't keep you an instant. Poor uncle gone, I hear?"

"Yes—poor old gentleman—the night before last."

"Premature, I suppose, to speculate about his little—a—testamentary arrangements?"

"Scarcely decent, perhaps; but I may tell you that there is no mystery about them at all."

"My dear Cosmo, I do hope Sir Robert has been loyal? Excuse the question; you know my affectionate interest."

"I don't quite understand you; but I believe my uncle has kindly left me all he had to leave, if that is what you mean."

"I am awfully glad to hear it! There is always a risk about uncles of that sort, you see. Satan is so apt to suggest a religious charity to a solitary old man when he is making his will. This is really charming: and since he *was* to die, he has timed his death so admirably!"

"Well, Tom, that is not the way I care to consider the subject. If you have nothing important to say, I fear I must ask you to let me go on with my work."

"I *have* something important to say. Have you seen that scandalous notice of his death in the papers?"

"Scandalous notice? No! Where?"

"In the 'Times.' Here it is. Look!"

"There is nothing scandalous about it. I inserted it myself."

"*My* dear Cosmo!" exclaimed Tom, searching in his friend's face for symptoms of lunacy.

"Well, it is a simple statement of facts."

"But 'Dunerlacht'? and 'Douglas'? Have I now the privilege of talking to Mr Cosmo Douglas, then?"

"Certainly."

"O Lord! this is beyond me. When did the transformation scene take place?"

"I discovered the history of our family immediately after my uncle's death."

"Well, Cosmo, my dear fellow, it can't possibly be a very creditable kind of descent. I do think you were wrong, under the circumstances, to mix the poor old man up with the name. He wouldn't have liked it."

"What *do* you mean?"

"That ought to be *my* question. Well, you must know that when I saw the newspaper notice, I took the trouble to get hold of 'Burke' and hunt up the Dunerlacht history; and, you mustn't be angry with me for saying so, old fellow, but it really *is* impossible that you can be descended from the 12th Lord Dunerlacht."

"I know, however, that I am."

"No, no; not legitimately."

"I have the proofs in this room."

"In that case you must be—your father, at

least, must be—Lord Dunerlacht. You don't claim that, do you?"

"No, I don't."

"Then you can't claim the descent at all. I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll just rush into Bobus Packer's, two doors off, and borrow his 'Burke' for a minute, and show you. His father was what Lord Germistoune calls a 'flagrant huckster,' and he is sure to have a 'Burke.' I shan't be a moment." Tom was off and back immediately, with the volume in question.

"Now, Cosmo," he cried, "here is the place; but listen, and I'll read you off a *résumé* of it, as I've been over the ground before. Listen—

"The 12th Lord had three sons—Archibald, George, and Norman. *None* of them survived him. He was succeeded by his *only* grandson, George—the only child of George, his second son. Very well; young George, the 13th Baron, died, in his youth unmarried. The title then went back to a nephew of the 12th Baron, who thus became 14th Baron, and, having received the British peerage of Germistoune, was succeeded, on his death, by Archibald, 2d Viscount Germistoune and 15th Baron Dunerlacht—our not altogether satisfactory old friend. All this is as clear as daylight; so that you see, Cosmo,

there is really no one for you to descend from—no one, at least, who was married."

"I am descended from Norman."

"Who died unmarried."

"The proofs of his marriage are in this room."

"In that case your father is Lord Dunerlacht."

"Nonsense! Here, look at the proofs, and a short *résumé* of the case to connect them, which I had from my uncle's lips."

Tom carefully examined them, and presently looked up with an expression of eager astonishment. "Then,—then, by George! Cosmo, there's no error about it. These proofs seem to establish the marriage, and, the marriage being established, your father *is* the 15th Baron Dunerlacht, as certainly as I am not."

"I—I don't understand," faltered Cosmo.

"Hang it! man, take the book and use your common sense. Read it; I should think it's the pleasantest bit of reading you ever did in your life. I suppose there is no doubt that a man's great-grandson is his heir, rather than his grand-nephew?"

"Yes, of course, he is."

"Well, then, read, mark, and learn that your father becomes Lord Dunerlacht *vice* the Right Honourable Jupiter Tonans, who retires upon an

allowance, retaining his rank as Viscount Germistoune—and his Thistle ;—we must leave him his Thistle."

Cosmo examined the book, and re-examined it, and at last said, "I can scarcely credit my own eyes ; but if this book is authentic—if there is no mistake——"

"How *can* there be ? The facts are supplied by Lord Germistoune himself."

"Then it is—it must be, as you say ; but—but what will happen ?"

"The first thing that happens is that I offer you the right hand of fellowship, and hail you 'the Master of Dunerlacht !' The next thing is that old Germistoune will lie down on his back and kick and bite and struggle, with all the forms of law, to resist eviction. The next thing is that he will be evicted. The next—oh ! all sorts of glorious events will happen, in a mellow future. The eye of prophecy grows clear, and I can see —among other things—about sundown, on the 12th of August, next year, two graceful, yet manly, forms, slowly descending the hills which overhang the beautiful valley of the Erlacht. They are in earnest converse. The less attractive of the two appears to plead with his handsomer companion, who at last replies, with a

winning smile, 'Well, well; so be it! I'll throw them all over. Hang the duke! I'll disappoint him, and stay with you till the end of the season. I'm not the selfish beast people say.' The speaker is Thomas Wyedale, Esquire, and he addresses his friend, the Master of Dunerlacht."

"This is not the time for fooling, Tom. It is a very grave crisis for me, and there are a hundred other reasons which make a different tone suitable and necessary."

"I beg your pardon, Cosmo; I forgot that I was, to a certain extent, in the house of mourning. You must forgive me, however, for feeling jolly; I can't help it, you know: but perhaps, under the circumstances, I had better leave you?"

"I think so, Tom."

"Very well; I'll look in to-morrow, when I've sobered down a bit. At present I *must* go and laugh somewhere. When I think of the old patriarch's face—O Lord! it's too much for me. Good-bye, Cosmo!" and Tom disappeared in convulsions. He went, like an arrow from a bow, straight to the most frequented of his clubs, and on thence to the many other centres of life and gossip, which boasted his membership. At each he retailed this startling novelty, this splendid material for a *cause célèbre;* and

made a most dramatic story of the discovery, in which he figured as a kind of over-ruling providence, righting the wronged and casting down the wicked in the naughtiness of their hearts. It was all over the town by sunset; and, before that time, a good many people had remembered and remarked that they had always detested old Germistoune, who had no merits, except in regard to his wine and his shooting, which were quite over-handicapped by his intolerable bumptiousness.

Tom dashed in to his sister's, for just one moment, before dinner, and, without sitting down, breathlessly gave her the news, asking, as he left, "How about the foundling now?"—which cast Mrs Ravenhall into deep thought. What she *did* think about "the foundling" may perhaps be gathered from this nice little unconscious note which Cosmo received next morning:—

"Dear Mr Glencairn—I forget who my informant was, but some one of my numerous visitors, this afternoon, mentioned incidentally that Sir Robert Glencairn, whose death was announced this morning, was your uncle; and, I trust, one little word of sympathy, from a not very old but a very sincere friend, will not be

unacceptable to you. I need scarcely say that you have been *much* in my thoughts for many months past. No true woman could but have felt for the *cruel* position in which I know you to have been *so cruelly* placed; and it touches me deeply to think that another sorrow has been added to the *great grief* which you have borne so manfully. But your uncle has served his country faithfully, and gone honourably to his rest, and this reflection will support you in your bereavement. My husband sends his kind regards and condolences. He had a very high opinion of the late Sir Robert's administrative ability.—With sincere sympathy, believe me, dear Mr Glencairn, yours very truly,

"Lucy Ravenhall.

"*P.S.*—I observe that Sir Robert had recently assumed another name. Is it *indiscreet* to ask if this were done in consequence of succeeding to a property? In any case, it cannot be indiscreet to express a hope that, if so, you now inherit it. Dear Mr Glencairn, I *do* so hope and trust that *happy* days are yet in store for you!—L. R.

"Belgrave Square,
"Wednesday Evening."

Cosmo laid the note down with a grim smile. "Tom," he said, "has lost no time."

CHAPTER LIX.

The agitation into which the receipt of Cosmo's letter threw Lord Germistoune was very natural. He had, of course, no suspicion that Norman Douglas had ever been married. The history of that strange being was, indeed, involved in utter obscurity; but, before Lord Germistoune's father had entered on the succession opened by the death of young George, the 13th Baron, the interval of time prescribed by law had been suffered to elapse, and during it, every effort had been made to trace the lost heir. By the time young George died, however, Norman Glencairn had himself been some years dead, and the secret of his identity with Norman Douglas, slumbered in the neglected leaves of the old pocket Bible. Thus all searches or advertisements for him, or for any child he might have left, necessarily failed to attain their object; and in due time, the law being inferentially satisfied of his death and

childlessness, the succession passed to the Germistounes, to whom, after nearly two generations of undisputed possession, the possibility of disturbance was unlikely to occur. But, when a man of probity, intelligence, and position came forward and gravely asserted, not merely that Norman Douglas had been married and left descendants, but that clear evidence of these facts was in his possession, and that he himself was prepared to prove, by legal process, his legitimate descent from the individual in question,—a host of terrible possibilities, and even probabilities, rushed into the old lord's mind, and temporarily overwhelmed him. To contemplate the loss of everything that, in his eyes, made life worth having, was sufficiently horrible; but to contemplate the transfer of all he prized to the men whom, of all others, he hated, was enough to madden a quieter brain. No wonder that he staggered like a drunken man, and succumbed, for a time, to this thunderbolt from a serene sky. Suspense, however, was intolerable; and, since every document purporting to bear on the question was in possession of the claiming party, suspense must endure till their evidence had been examined and an opinion as to its validity obtained.

Within a couple of hours, therefore, Lord Germistoune, having so far mastered his agitation, summoned his solicitor, and in the course of the day, that gentleman called upon Cosmo and possessed himself of all the facts of the case. Thereafter, he returned to his lordship with words of comfort and good cheer, born, in great measure, of his haziness on the subject of Scotch marriage-law, which, in truth, *is* a hazy subject, and "a marvel to many."

"My Lord, I do not think that they have the shadow of a case. *Primâ facie*, at least, it appears to me that it won't hold water at all. Make your mind easy, and take no notice of them. They will, in all probability, be better advised than to attempt a fight. In the meantime, silence is our true tactics."

Thus the lawyer delivered himself; but silence was, under the circumstances, impossible for Lord Germistoune. He wrote to Cosmo a violent, browbeating letter, pointing out that, since the claim to descent involved a claim to the family honours and estates, he might bring himself into perilous relations with the criminal law, if he attempted to establish his position upon grounds which should prove to be inauthentic, frivolous, or suspicious.

Cosmo replied, in a few temperate lines, merely stating that it was impossible so momentous a matter should be permitted to remain undecided, and that an action would be at once raised to establish his father's right to the estates and title of the Dunerlacht family.

No movement was made in the matter until after Sir Robert's funeral. Then, for the first time, Mr Glencairn, who was of a sceptical turn, came to admit, on a closer investigation of the case, that there was "something in it," and he was induced to go with Cosmo to Edinburgh, for legal advice. The case was placed into the most experienced hands, and pronounced to be "full of promise." It took a considerable time to prepare, however; for reference had to be made to India, and affidavits had to be obtained from the proper officers there, establishing the authenticity of the certificates which proved the birth and marriage of Cosmo's grandfather, as well as of the birth of his father, which had also taken place in Bengal. In this way several months elapsed—months of anxiety and suspense for Cosmo, and, in a minor degree, for his father also, but which restored the equanimity of Lord Germistoune, who was satisfied, by the apparent inaction of the claim-

ants, that their claim had been definitively abandoned.

From this fool's paradise he was rudely awakened in the early winter, by receiving notice of an action to be at once raised before the Court of Session, by which Archibald Glencairn, or Douglas, sought to establish his title to the lands of Dunerlacht and Ferniehall, now in the wrongful possession of Viscount Germistoune.

It would not be interesting to the reader, were we to do more than summarise the results of the various legal processes. Suffice it to say that, after a very keen contest, conducted on either side with the highest talent and skill which the Scotch Bar could produce, a decision was given unreservedly in favour of the claimant. Archibald Glencairn was pronounced to be Archibald Douglas, and the legal possessor of the estates claimed.

With regard to the family honours, the Court of Session having no jurisdiction to decide any question as to a peerage, Mr Douglas thereupon presented a petition to the Queen, setting forth that his right to the Dunerlacht peerage was inferentially affirmed by the judgment as to the Dunerlacht estates, and praying, therefore,

that he might now be permitted to assume it. This petition was referred by her Majesty to the House of Lords, and by them to the Committee of Privileges. The hearing came on at the beginning of the parliamentary session, and was concluded, in one or two consecutive sittings, with a celerity as satisfactory as it is unusual.

Lord Germistoune had unbounded faith in the wisdom of the Peers, and he had no doubt that their decision would be in his favour; and, since this would involve the eventual reduction of the Scotch Court's finding as to the estates, he confidently looked forward to his full restoration to the *status quo ante*.

The Peers, however, disappointed his lordship's anticipations. They decided unanimously that Archibald Douglas, the petitioner, was the 15th Baron Dunerlacht, and lord of the lands of Dunerlacht and Ferniehall.

So that Archibald Douglas, the opponent, was the second Viscount Germistoune, the squire of a moderate estate in Wales—and nothing more.

CHAPTER LX.

THE new Lord Dunerlacht and his son passed the evening together, on the day when the final decision was given. The former bore his honours, not meekly—for he did nothing meekly—but with profound indifference. A title was valueless, in his eyes; for though, theoretically, it altered his social position, practically, it could not much affect a man who had always avoided society, and who had no intention of permitting his way of life to be disturbed, because other people might now think more of him, and desire his acquaintance.

Then—with regard to the pecuniary succession—the fortune was, indeed, large, for the rental of the Scotch estates turned out to be considerably over thirty thousand a year; but, large as this fortune was, it produced no agitating effects on a man accustomed to vast financial operations, and to the ups and downs of

financial life. It represented a grand capital, to be sure, but *unavailable* capital, for the entail stood between the family estates and speculation; and this, at a time when available capital was his chief desideratum, appeared to him to neutralise, in a great degree, the value of his new acquisition.

Cosmo, on the other hand, having believed the decision in their favour to be a foregone conclusion, had long ago familiarised himself by anticipation with his new position; and two thoughts almost exclusively occupied him to-night. One was, that her father's deposition could not but be distressing to Esmè; and the other concerned the bearing which the change of circumstances might have upon his hopes of eventually winning her.

Engrossed, therefore, with very different trains of thought, father and son passed the evening without much conversation. Towards its close, the former broke a long silence by saying—"I must be going immediately, Cosmo; but, before I go, there is a matter of business to be settled between us. I am glad to say that things in the commercial world are beginning to improve; the iron business is paying its way, and some of the foreign stocks which have

double-locked the remains of my capital, are decidedly moving upwards in value. Still, I may never be able to repay you your advance. If I ever can do so, it will be after a long delay."

"My dear father, I wish for no repayment."

"Yes, you do; at least you require money; and you shall have it, in one way or another—and at once. If my affairs ever came right, it would be my wish simply to turn the whole of this Scotch property over to you, on condition that I was never bothered about affairs I know nothing of. At present, since a man must live, that cannot be; but what I can, I will do. In the first place, I propose, of course, to give you the interest on your large advance. Don't interrupt me; that admits of no discussion. This brings me to another point: you wish to be married, and objections to you on the score of position are now removed; may I ask if the lady has given her consent?"

"Yes, father, she has, but——"

"Very well, then, what extra income shall you require? You can ask nothing that, up to my abilities, I will not be glad to give."

"You are most good; but I fear it will still be difficult to get the young lady's father to

consent. I have not yet told you that she is Lord Germistoune's daughter."

"Good heavens! what do you say?"

Cosmo repeated his statement, and Lord Dunerlacht expressed his astonishment by a prolonged whistle.

"Very strange," he said, "and very unlucky. That is a man who won't readily forgive us for recovering our rights at his expense."

"I fear not."

"I presume that the young lady is—is very attractive?"

"She has every perfection. I don't suppose that there ever yet lived any one who——"

"Exactly. Therefore, I suppose, you are not likely to abandon the idea?"

"I would far sooner abandon life. I could never live if——"

"I understand. Well, it must be managed somehow."

Lord Dunerlacht sat in deep thought for some time, and at last said—

"After all, the match ought to suit him exactly. His daughter and you are the last of the family; your marriage would unite all interests, and the family he thinks so much about, would, if continued at all, be continued through his

own descendants. It would really be much the same to him, as having a son of his own for his successor."

"No doubt these considerations ought to have powerful influence with him; but personal interest is often sacrificed to pride and animosity. I fear this may be a case in point."

Lord Dunerlacht again reflected silently for a little, and then said: "The question I have been weighing is,—whether a man like Lord Germistoune is likely to be cooled, or embittered, by reflection. Do you think that if the proposal were made to him at once, he might accept it, as an immediate salve to his dignity and a counterpoise to his loss?"

Whatever Cosmo's cool judgment might have said, the impatience of a lover spoke, and pronounced for immediate action.

"Very well, I will make the proposal to him myself," said Lord Dunerlacht.

"*You*, father?"

"Yes; he stands on forms and ceremonies, and I am now, ha! ha! the head of the house! A proposal from me, with the offers I am prepared to make as to settlements, would probably be the best move."

"I assure you I feel your affectionate interest very deeply, and I hope you will not misunderstand me, if I beg to be allowed to see your letter before it is sent. The great thing is to avoid wounding Lord Germistoune's susceptibilities. I know him better than you do, and——"

"Say no more, Cosmo. I'll write the letter now, and you shall edit and improve it to the best of your ability."

This was accordingly done: and though it took a long time to get the letter into a shape which Cosmo approved, that was, at last, to a certain extent achieved. It expressed, in very good taste, the writer's sympathy with Lord Germistoune under his loss of lands and title; also a desire to consult his wishes in all ways that could tend to make his loss as little irksome as possible, and to act, in every way, as a kinsman ought to act. The marriage was then proposed; the expediency of the arrangement —from a family point of view—was pointed out, and an offer was made to assure to the young couple such an income as Lord Germistoune himself might name as suitable. The letter was not all that Cosmo could have desired, though his father made many concessions

to him in adopting what he considered a tone of unmerited courtesy, but it seemed pretty unobjectionable on the whole; and in this shape it was despatched.

The impatient lover could not complain that he was kept long in suspense. Very early next forenoon, Lord Dunerlacht received the following reply:—

"My Lord,—I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of the letter which your lordship has done me the favour to address to me. As a comprehensive and sufficient answer to its contents, I beg leave to say that I must decline, for myself and for my daughter, any further communication, upon any subject whatsoever, with your lordship or your lordship's son.—I have the honour to be, my lord, your lordship's most obedient humble servant, Germistoune.

"The Right Honourable
"Lord Dunerlacht."

"The man is a raving lunatic," said Lord Dunerlacht, when he had given the letter to his son; "but don't be cast down, Cosmo. He'll come to his senses by-and-by, and see reason. Self-interest asserts itself, in the long-run."

This philosophical reflection was cold enough comfort, however; and Cosmo *was* cast down, and very far down indeed.

In the course of the day, a letter came for him, addressed, in a lady's handwriting, to

"The Master of Dunerlacht."

It was the first time he had seen himself thus styled, and he opened it with curiosity. It ran as follows:—

"My dear Master—I took a fancy to you, the first time I saw you (and heard you), in the House of Commons. I think I must have told you so, when we met, as I generally say what I think. We all worship the rising sun—we worldlings—so you will not be surprised to find me *now* repeating that I *have* a fancy for you, and that I hope you will come and see me. While the legal decision was pending, it would have been indiscreet in me, for many reasons, to have anything to do with you; but now all is changed. It seems that you are as much my cousin, in a far-away Scotch fashion, as the poor old lord is; and I am very anxious that we should be friends. You know, of course, that I was set as a watch-dog to guard a certain lamb from a certain wolf; and you may be

certain that, if the wolf had made it necessary (which, to do him justice, he never did), I was prepared to spring upon him and worry him without mercy. But now it turns out that he was no wolf, after all, but the most valuable animal of the flock, in disguise; so that the watch-dog is naturally anxious to cherish him, and look after his interests.

"Parables apart, I hope everything will now be soon settled, as you and dear Esmè wish. Such an arrangement would be a most sensible, not to say romantic, way of setting things to rights, allaying bitter feelings, and so forth. Come and talk to me about it.—Yours very truly, OCTOPA HAWKER.

"*P.S.*—Men are such wretches, the horrible thought occurs to me, that prosperity may make you fickle. It generally does; but, if you do not prove an exception, you shall never more be cousin of mine, my Master; and if you don't come and see me very soon, I shall believe that you are just like all the rest of them."

Cosmo would have clung to a straw for assistance, in the renewed shipwreck of his hopes; and here was a good, sound, serviceable plank at his disposal. It is not surprising that he

caught at it eagerly, and went, that very afternoon, to renew his acquaintance with this friendly far-away cousin. Arrived at Lady Octopa's house, Cosmo, inadvertently, gave his name to the servant as "Mr Glencairn," and was thus announced.

Now it so happened that, at that very moment, her ladyship was discussing the Dunerlacht decision, with several friends, over afternoon tea, and, in the discussion, occupied a commanding position from her announced relationship with the parties, and also from a pretty broad hint, on her part, that she had a scheme on hand for giving romantic point and finish to a story which was admitted to be romantic. Her audience, in fact, gathered, that her ladyship's matrimonial skill was about to be again tested (and no doubt with results equal to her reputation), under circumstances of extraordinary difficulty and interest. Lady Octopa, in a word, looking upon the marriage as a foregone conclusion, was discounting the success of manœuvres, which she had no reason to believe would take place, except in her own imagination.

Nothing, then, could be better timed or more welcome than this visit of Cosmo's. In a society which worships novelty, *prestige* accrues even

from a remote connection with the novelty or sensation of the hour. Cosmo was unquestionably the topic of the hour, and Lady Octopa could exactly appreciate the value of his visit. His accidental introduction under what was now a misnomer, gave her ladyship an admirable, almost a dramatic, opportunity of advertising to her visitors that the *topic* himself was in their midst.

"My dear Master!" she cried, going to meet him, with both her hands extended, "I *do* call it very charming of you to come so soon,—before your worries are a day over; but why *incognito?*"

"It was a very natural act of obliviousness, on my part, Lady Octopa," said Cosmo, in some confusion, as his hostess led him back with an air of proprietorship to the circle, which stared at him with the steadfast scrutiny of curiosity and criticism, distinctive of the more highly cultured classes in England. The advertisement being then completed, Lady Octopa made no further special allusions; but gave her guests what she considered a generous allowance of time to feast their eyes upon her lion, and to pick up materials for table-talk, from such stray roarings as he chanced to emit. But there are

limits to the greatest generosity; and when her guests had transgressed these, by sitting at gaze for an unseemly time, her ladyship, who was one of those privileged persons, for whom force of character, or caprice of fashion, secures great latitude of speech and action, suddenly gave them their *congé*.

"Now, my dear people," she cried, with charming frankness, "I am going to send you all away,—all but the Master. I have only a few minutes to spare, for we are going to the play to night, and dine early; and these few minutes I must give to my cousin, and some family matters."

So the guests went away, reluctantly,—consoled, however, by the reflection that they knew more than any one else, and might *almost* say they had been present when Lady Octopa made the first move in her game of intrigue and romance, which was, no doubt, destined to culminate in one of the season's great sensations.

"Tell me why you have come so soon?" was her ladyship's first question when she and Cosmo were left by themselves.

"You were so warm in your invitation, Lady Octopa, I could not think of postponing the pleasure."

"If I had been thirty years younger, that might have been a correct answer; as it is—no! Young men don't rush to see old women of sixty, for the pleasure of looking at their faces. Let us try again."

"Really, Lady Octopa, you are—very—very——"

Cosmo broke down, and her ladyship went on—

"Either you wish me to help you in a certain affair, or you wish to explain that I was under a misapprehension—and that what was believed to be a wolf was only a butterfly; which is it?"

"I certainly require advice and help, and if you will be so kind as to give them to me, I shall be for ever grateful."

"Why not have said that at once? I told you I had only five minutes to spare. You are not a butterfly, then?"

"Certainly not."

"Very well, you shall have my help. What's the matter?"

"Lord Germistoune will not listen to my proposals."

"Why? have you tried him? *since?*"

"Yes, and we received his reply this morning."

"Refusing?"

"Absolutely."

"The old goose! He will repent."

"I fear not; his tone is very decided."

"No matter, he will repent."

"But why, and how?"

"For various reasons. It will be wise in him to repent; but he won't repent because he is wise, but because he is crazy. The name of Douglas of Dunerlacht is very dear to him. To be pushed out of the line of ancestry will be very grievous to him. A strange mind, you will say, which covets the ancestral position as a grand object? yes, and Germistoune has a strange mind. He has looked forward all his life to being a Dunerlacht ancestor; and now—well, when he realises all this, he will begin to repent. Then, if Esmè only assures him, and he can be got to believe, that she will never marry any one else, he will repent altogether; for, if there is one set of people he hates worse than another, it is the Williamses, who, failing Esmè, inherit the Welsh property. So that, though he may come to a wise decision, his reasons for reaching it won't be those of a sage, you see. The dilemma will be a cruel one for him,—between two hatreds. But, after all, he

ought not to go hating people in the promiscuous way he does—the wretch!"

"Then you think all I can do is to wait in patience?"

"All *you* can do, but not all *I* can do. I will bring it about, Master. Leave it to me."

"My dear Lady Octopa, how good! how kind!"

"Perhaps. I like Esmè; I have a sort of fancy for you; but the affair also has attractions for its own sake. I'm quite frank with you, you see. Yes, I will bring it about; but you must promise to leave the whole affair in my hands, and not to interfere yourself, or consult others."

"I promise most willingly."

"I don't like partnerships, in such matters. I don't mind doing all the work, and I insist upon having all the glory. I will go and see how the land lies to-morrow, and you shall have a note reporting progress. On second thoughts, though, I won't write. You shall come here for your news. I wish that we should be friends, and we can't become friends if we never meet *en petit comité*, which we never should, if interested motives did not bring you here."

"You take a cynical view of me."

"Of men; and I don't know you, yet, to be different from the rest of them. Now, good-bye, I must go and dress. I am very glad to have seen you, and I needn't tell you to come back; the difficulty will be to keep you out of the house. *Au revoir.*"

CHAPTER LXI.

The state of Lord Germistoune's mind, when the final award was given, it would be rather hard to define. Every one else was prepared for the result, but not so his lordship, who had laughed at the finding of the Court of Session. The "Bible" marriage he had decided to be an absurdity; the "Glencairn" marriage to be invalid, from having been contracted under a false name; while the construction of a valid marriage out of these two factors, involved a monstrosity beyond the consideration of sane men. He had formulated this in a phrase which had become axiomatic in his eyes—"You can't have a *composite* marriage,"—and, with the profoundest reverence for the wisdom of the peers, he believed that the axiom would, at once, be recognised as such by them. When, therefore, they trampled it under foot, though he submitted, perforce, to their decision, the

disappointment was utterly crushing. It crushed out the capability of violent wrath, replacing it with bitter chagrin and abject woe. His sensitive family pride was brayed as in a mortar. The legitimate chief of his house—the successor of peerless paladins—was a "huckster!" Their escutcheon was tarnished, their race degraded: he felt that he himself was lowered, not by loss of the title, but by the damnification which the title had now sustained. The loss of land and money was bitter, but nothing to the loss of family *prestige*. And then, that his supplanter in everything should be his arch-foe Glencairn!—this was the very abomination of desolation!

His first feeling was that he would retire in mournful dignity from the world, like a dethroned monarch. As for the new Dunerlachts, he could not dispute their title, but he would disown them, with scorn, as their ancestor had been disowned, and the real traditions of the family would die with himself. His answer to Lord Dunerlacht had been conceived in this spirit. He had ostentatiously acknowledged his rank, and, at the same time, though in the tone due to rank, he had expressed his personal contempt.

In this frame of spirit Lady Octopa found him when she paid her first diplomatic visit.

She found him alone, and looking terribly broken and woe-begone. "Ah! Cousin Octopa," he said, "I am glad to see you; but, if you have come to condole, let me tell you that I hate condolences."

"No, I haven't come to condole; but is the subject tabooed? Remember that my mother was a Douglas."

"You are distinctly entitled to converse with me on the family catastrophe; but I will have no condolences."

"My dear lord, be at ease on that subject; I have no heart."

"You have, however, no doubt, some feeling for the degradation of the name."

"Is the man so *very* bad?"

"He is a pestilent *roturier*."

"Come! remember he is our chief, and we ought to make the best of him. He can't be a *roturier*, whatever he is."

"I repeat that he is personally pestilent, and a *roturier* in his instincts. He will trade under our title: we shall have vans labelled,—'Lord Dunerlacht & Co. (Limited),' plying in the streets of London. There are a number of

members of the peerage, whose fathers, or grandfathers, were picked out of the gutter, washed, and put into ermine. None of these men, even, would be guilty of such a thing; but this fellow will—I know it, I feel it."

"Not a bit of him; and, I hear he is not likely to be *en evidence* at all—no one will see him. Let us make the best of him."

"How?"

"Why, the common-sense thing would be, to countenance the son, and help him on in every way. He has the makings of a very distinguished man."

"An insufferable prig—a dogmatic puppy!"

"Perhaps; but a man of talent and not a *roturier*. With your countenance, he might come to anything, and restore the dignity of the name."

"He shall have no countenance from me; and as for the name, it is hopelessly degraded. What do you think the scoundrels have done?"

"What?"

"Why, written me this letter; there! read it."

He handed Lord Dunerlacht's letter to Lady Octopa, who read it, and said—

"The tone is proper, and, I should say,

gentlemanlike; though the proposal is, certainly, rather premature."

"*Rather* premature?"

"Well, *very* premature."

"Damnably premature, I say!"

"Well, 'damnably' premature. I'm not afraid of your brimstone words."

"'Premature' isn't the word for it at all; it is an impertinence which would not mend by keeping."

"Half the grand dames in London would be overjoyed at such an offer."

"Possibly. Thank heaven! I'm not a grand dame."

"Maria, Marchioness of Mopus, has vowed to secure him for Lady Ermyntrude."

"Maria, Marchioness of Mopus, be ——"

"Stop, my dear Germistoune; I won't have a marchioness brutalised. Such a thing is quite unheard of. I am astonished."

"I beg your ladyship's pardon. I suffer from gout. It is responsible for my indiscretion."

"I'm sorry to hear of the gout. I daresay all these worries have brought it on. Poor man!"

"Don't condole."

"I beg your lordship's pardon. I suffer from neuralgia. It is responsible for my indiscretion."

"He will trade under the title; mark my words. He will—to spite me."

"Not the young man?"

"No; the old villain. 'Lord Dunerlacht & Co. (Limited).' 'Archibald 15th Baron Dunerlacht & Co. (Limited)!' It's maddening!"

"I don't believe he will do anything of the sort. But even if he did, surely the *prestige* of the family is sufficient to carry off the eccentricities of one generation. In any case, a word from you would set everything to rights; you see that the tone of his letter is really deferential."

"I would not condescend to express any interest in his proceedings."

"Though you condescend to let his proceedings interest you to a 'maddening' extent?"

"I beg you, Lady Octopa, not to argue. Under present circumstances, argument is in—sufferable to me."

"Very well, I won't; and under present circumstances I will suspend my judgment, which was beginning to be that Lord Germistoune is not the acute and finished man of the world which the world takes him to be. Gout is, no

doubt, responsible for temper, and temper clouds our views of everything. The gout being gone, the eclipse will cease."

"I think your ladyship allows yourself a considerable latitude of criticism," said Lord Germistoune, rearing himself up to the springing position.

"I always do, my dear lord; all the world knows that. Come, Germistoune, don't be cross; you know you can't frighten me,—never could, since we were children. However, I won't tease you any more to-day. I believe a little teasing *has* a good effect, when a man is in the dumps; but you have had enough of it, for one dose, so let us change the subject. What do you think of the majority last night? etc. etc. etc."

Lady Octopa came away from the visit, rather thoughtful. The thing was not to be done by a *coup de main*. The slower operations of sapping and mining must be had recourse to.

CHAPTER LXII.

The next few weeks went past, without any break in the clouds which obscured the lovers' heaven. Cosmo constantly visited Lady Octopa, but could get nothing definite from her. He must be content to wait, she said; her success was certain—of that he might be assured—but her measures required time for their development; "Wait and Trust" must be his motto. So he waited and trusted, in good heart and hope, and followed the business of his life with earnestness and energy. He spoke in the House several times, and it was clear that he was destined to make his mark there. His romantic story and accession of rank assisted his personal *prestige*. Society not only extended its hand to him, but cast out eager arms constraining him to its close embraces. These, however, he resisted in a great degree, seeking in his parliamentary duties the chief distraction of a thought-

ful, and otherwise somewhat solitary, way of life.

Lord Germistoune's loss of fortune necessarily compelled him to alter his style of living; but he, in his *rôle* of dethroned monarch, naturally did a great deal more than was at all necessary in that way. He was still left with £7000 a year, and, since his expenditure had always been moderate, the change need not have involved any great shock. He was determined to have the shock, however. He gave up his house in Grosvenor Square, and removed to a small and rather lugubrious abode in Hans Place; he put down his carriage, and reduced the rest of his establishment to a minimum. He ceased to entertain and declined entertainment; and abandoning, for the present at least, all ambitions as to Esmè's marriage, which, indeed, had been conceived with reference to circumstances now non-existent, he discouraged all efforts of Lady Octopa and other friends to give the poor girl any of the distractions of society. "Under the circumstances," he said, "nothing of the sort would be seemly."

So that he was quite the dethroned monarch. Probably he would have also abdicated his parliamentary functions altogether, had not the

Welsh miners again thought fit to strike:—a "flagrant circumstance" which offered an alleviation to the despondency of a gouty and disgusted old age, which threatened to get the better of him. For his political instincts were thus fired by personal interest, the loss of his mineral royalties being severely felt in his altered circumstances. And so he set himself to concoct a bill for the suppression of trades-unions by the strong arm of the law; also to compose a tremendous pamphlet, intended to pioneer the bill, and in which these associations were described in colossal language, as "parts of a felonious, piratical, cosmopolitan polype, moving darkly under the surface of European society, and seeking to asphyxiate all the capital of Europe with its obscene tentacles."

A good deal of gout, and general bitterness of soul, were blown off in these literary efforts, and in constant propagandist visits to the House, where he bored his brother peers with the eternal subject of his forthcoming bill. In this characteristic way, he was preserved from succumbing to his reverse of fortune, during the first stage of that dire experience.

In all these chances and changes, the greatest sufferer was poor Esmè, whose life was now

made, simply, a burden to her. No hope seemed to offer promise of better days; the change in Cosmo's position only seemed to thicken the wall of separation which kept them apart. It did not enter into Lady Octopa's policy to confide to Esmè the existence of her friendly strategy; and Cosmo's name was never mentioned between them. The only occasions on which Esmè heard that name uttered, were, when Lord Germistoune, enraged by some new hardship, arising from the change of his fortunes, loaded Cosmo and his father with maledictions, as the authors of the calamity. On such occasions, too, she not uncommonly received a share of his abuse, being held, in some mysterious way, responsible for the villanies of the Glencairns, including, apparently, the audacious nuptials of Norman Glencairn and Jean Lothian.

The distractions of society were now denied to her. She was a prisoner whose solitary confinement was only relieved by the occasional companionship of an old man who had lost even such kindly characteristics as he once possessed, and who now, in his best moods, was bitter and cantankerous, and, in his less happy moments, displayed the qualities of a highly seasoned fiend.

If all sunshine and all hope of sunshine are taken from life, the hardiest human plant will droop and wither. If all outlet for generous and loving emotions is denied to a tender and ardent heart, it will fret itself till it breaks. Such was Esmè's case; she drooped and withered, and her heart was breaking. The colour left her beautiful face, the light faded from her innocent eyes, and the blithesome elasticity of youthful movement was replaced by the languid gait and gestures of apathy.

CHAPTER LXIII.

Lady Octopa's diplomatic overtures had been renewed over and over again; she had tried many different forms of approach, but as yet with signal failure. One day, coming to Hans Place, on one of these missions, after an interval of ten days, she was startled by the change in Esmè's appearance.

"My dear child!" she cried, "what is the matter? You look like a ghost."

"Nothing," said Esmè. When the whole life is brought down to the level of utter wretchedness,—when *everything* is the matter,—we find it hard to particularise, and we say, "nothing."

"Nothing! why, you are thin and pale and —oh, you are *dreadfully* ill! Any one can see that. I must have Sir Cavy to see you at *once*. Where is your papa?"

"I believe he is in the next room; but he is unwell."

"I'll go and see him, at once; I never beheld such an object as you have become!" So saying, the vigorous dame went to the lion's den.

"Good morning, Germistoune!" she cried, bouncing into his lordship's presence.

"Hush! hush! Lady Octopa. Pray don't speak so loud. I am in agony—in torment. This accursed foot—oh!"

"Gout again?"

Lord Germistoune rolled his agonised eyes upon her, but, for reply, he only groaned.

"I wish to speak to you about Esmè," said Lady Octopa.

"Now, Lady Octopa, let me tell you, once for all, that I will have no more of this confounded intriguing," cried the old lord, forgetting his foot, for the moment, and sitting bolt upright; "let me add that I won't have 'the Glencairns' mentioned in this room. There!"

"My dear Lord, you've got 'Glencairn' on the brain. I should like to know what possible interest I can have in them?"

"Why mention them, then?"

"I didn't mention them. Don't be a baby!"

"Your ladyship forgets yourself."

"Not a bit of it. It is about Esmè I wish to speak to you. She is very ill."

"Rubbish!"

"For you, perhaps, but not for her, or those who really love her. I tell you the child is alarmingly ill; and you must have a doctor to see her at once. Her colour is gone; she is half the size she was; she looks like consumption, but I have tested the action of the heart, and I find that the mischief is *there*."

"It is a little odd, I think, that I should be the last person to observe all this."

"It *would* be, in any other man, but not in your case."

"Why, pray?"

"Because you are entirely engrossed with yourself. There! that's frank. Now, now!" she cried, holding up her hand, as Lord Germistoune was going to break out,—"don't try to shout me down and frighten me; you can't do it; no one can. I tell you the girl is alarmingly ill."

"I tell you she is nothing of the sort."

"Will you use your stupid old eyes?"

"Lady Octopa! I——" But here he was interrupted by a terrific spasm, so that his sentence evaporated in miscellaneous howling.

Lady Octopa, seeing him thus impracticable, and feeling that the thin edge of the wedge was

inserted, left him and went promptly to Sir Cavy Bolus—the eminent physician who advised both families.

The doctor was bland and politic, the private friend of all his patients, and the confidant in many domestic mysteries, as doctors are wont to be. He was a kindly man, as it is also the wont of doctors to be, and, in fact, "a good man all round" where it was a question of managing obstreperous patients.

With him Lady Octopa dealt astutely; a ray of light had flashed upon her; she beheld a new point of departure for her manœuvres, and the doctor must be pressed into her service, if it were to be utilised. She told him, then, that she had come to talk to him about Miss Douglas, whose condition caused her anxiety. She told him that there *had* been a love-affair (it would never do to mix a family doctor up with a love-affair *in esse*)—that there *had* been a love-affair through which Esmè had suffered, not merely from disappointment, but from the tyrannical conduct of her father, who, though the affair was past and gone, continued to treat her with extraordinary harshness and even cruelty. Under this, and the absolute seclusion in which he kept her, her health was breaking down:—

the doctor would see *that* for himself, at a glance. The great thing was to get her away from her father for a little; so that while she had change of air and scene, and general distraction, her parent's bitterness might have time to evaporate. The doctor must drop in, accidentally, as a private friend to see her; he must be shocked by her appearance, alarm her father, and instantly order change of air. He ought to recommend sea-air; and, since the best kind of sea-air was notoriously to be found at Torquay, he ought to suggest Torquay.

The doctor smiled subtly, and said that his directions must always be guided by the symptoms of his patients; but that, if the symptoms were as stated, change of air would, doubtless, be a wise prescription. As to the seaside, in nine cases out of ten, a change to the seaside would be beneficial. He added that Torquay was a very nice—a very balmy place. He certainly would look in soon, as a private friend, and see Miss Douglas, who was a very dear creature in whom he felt deep interest.

In a word, Lady Octopa and the doctor, who were very fast friends, understood each other, and her ladyship felt that, if it rested with him,

Esmè would find herself at Torquay before many days were past.

Sir Cavy called the next day at the Germistounes' house. Miss Douglas was at home; he *was* greatly struck by her appearance, and he *could* honestly say that the state of her health *did* absolutely require change of air and scene, and as early as possible a relief from mental distress.

"I am sorry to find we are looking so poorly, my dear Miss Douglas," said the doctor, making straight for her pulse; "tut! tut! what's all this about? Something wrong here; we are not in our usual vigour by any means; ve-ry far from it. We must see to this." Then followed various queries, and the doctor said, presently, "We must get away out of this smoky town, for a breath of fresh air. How would a trip to the sea suit?"

"I don't care about it."

"You don't object?"

"No, I don't object."

"Supposing we were to try Torquay?"

"I have no preference for any place." This rather surprised the doctor.

"Any *objection* to Torquay?" he asked.

"No objection at all."

"Torquay is a very nice place; it is a ve-ry balmy place. I should be inclined to say Torquay. *Shall* we say Torquay?"

"If you please, Sir Cavy, but I have no voice in the matter."

"It will not be unpleasant to you if I recommend it to Lord Germistoune?"

"No; but papa will not likely agree to go, or to let me go there."

"I am very sure papa will agree to anything I say is for your good, my dear lady."

Hereupon Esmè completed the doctor's diagnosis by bursting into tears; and he, being a doctor, did not argue with the tears, or even remark on them; but, patting her gently on the head, with a paternal hand, left her, and went to see her father.

Into that awful presence he glided with the suave confidence of an expert in the soothing system.

"How is my lord? Servant tells me we've got a touch of the old enemy?"

"My servant didn't presume to send for you, Sir Cavy?"

"Not he; I was idling about in the neighbourhood, and thought I would look in, and hear your news. This is not a fee visit, ha! ha! but

I'll convert it into one, at once, if you wish, ha! ha! ha! Let us have a look at the—tut! tut!"—(as Lord Germistoune gave a yell)—"the limb."

"Don't touch my foot; don't come near it. You must be aware, Sir Cavy, that I never consult you in a case of gout. You know nothing about gout. I treat myself, invariably."

"Well, it's not a bad plan—far from a bad plan—when the patient has got to know himself as thoroughly as you have done. What is your treatment?"

Lord Germistoune described it, was complimented by the doctor on his system, and, there being no gouty paroxysms for a time, the conversation passed to general topics, upon which Sir Cavy was fluent and entertaining. Thus his lordship was manœuvred into a state of comparative equanimity, and then the doctor developed his attack.

"By the by, I am sorry to see Miss Douglas looking so poorly."

"You have seen her?"

"I have been paying my respects in the drawing-room."

"There's nothing the matter with her."

"Nothing serious, I hope and trust; but *something* is wrong—I can see that."

"Stuff!"

"Come, my lord, I can't let you depose my doctorial authority altogether. You're my superior in gout, we'll admit, but I must be allowed to have an opinion on general hygienics. There's a good deal of low fever going about just now."

Lord Germistoune's dread of fever amounted to a monomania, as the doctor very well knew. His lordship rose at once to the terrible idea—

"Good heavens, doctor! you don't insinuate that she has got anything so horrible?"

"One can never tell, from a superficial glance; but I'm bound to say that she has a very suggestive look about the eyes — ve-ry suggestive!"

"For God's sake, my dear Sir Cavy, go up and examine her, at once!"

"Well, I *do* think it would be expedient," and up the doctor went.

"Just to have another *little* look at you, Miss Douglas, and to ask a few more questions."

This wholly superfluous visit was very soon got over, and the doctor returned to the den, looking grave and thoughtful.

"Not fever of any sort, doctor? not fever?" cried his lordship.

"No, no; make your mind easy on *that* score; but I'm bound to tell you that I find some other symptoms in my dear young friend which I don't like—far from it."

"What are they?"

"She is suffering," said the doctor, in a sombre tone, "from nervous depression, in a very pronounced form."

"One of your new-fangled disorders!"

"No, Lord Germistoune; it may have changed its name a score of times, but it is as old as the human frame."

"But do you mean that it is serious?"

"It is my duty to say that the consequences *may* be as serious—as—as possible."

"Good heavens!" cried the old lord, starting up, "what can have produced it?"

"Several causes may produce it; but acute mental distress is the commonest of all. I could not suppose that to be the cause in this instance, and I did not touch on the question of origin with Miss Douglas; but, if any circumstances of that sort have existed, or do exist, your lordship is probably acquainted with them, and may act accordingly. If she *is* suffering from mental distress, we must, if possible, get rid of that."

"Mental distress is beyond a doctor's skill."

"True; but it can often be reached by a father's love. All this, however, is probably beside the question; but, in any case, we must act at once."

"What would you propose?" said Lord Germistoune, now quite meek and subdued. A crust had been growing over the love which he had for Esmè, and it was broken up now by alarm, and perhaps, also (though he would have resented the imputation), by remorse.

"Immediate change of scene," replied Sir Cavy; "you must take her to the sea."

"I can't move."

"Send some one else with her, then."

"Is it so very urgent?"

"It is my duty to say that it could not well be more urgent. She should go to-morrow."

"Where to?"

"I should be inclined to say Torquay. It is a very nice place; it is a very balmy place."

"She shall go to Torquay to-morrow!"

"Good! ve-ry good! That relieves my mind. Dear, dear, how late it is! Good-bye, my lord."

What between Lord Germistoune's gout and

his alarm, and (shall we say?) his remorse, he soon worked himself into a wild state of excitement. He sent for Esmè, and kissed and petted her, in the intervals between the paroxysms, assuring her that she was on the brink of death, and that she must fly to Torquay at once, as the only haven of refuge from the Destroyer.

Then, when she wept — for no particular reason except that her nerves were shattered — he took her tears to be protests against Torquay, and, in combating her supposed objections, he lashed himself into a fury, which was only quelled when she assured him that whatever the doctor thought necessary she would cheerfully submit to.

The question then was, Who could be got to take her to Torquay, and to *chaperon* her till her father was able to join her? While this difficulty was under discussion, in came Lady Octopa, in rather a remarkably *apropos* way. "Well," she said, affecting ignorance of the medical episode just completed — "well, *have* you used your eyes? *Do* you see that the girl is ill? *Will* you send for a doctor?"

"Hush, cousin Octopa! This is no time for a "boisterous tone. The dear child is at death's door."

"My turn now to say 'rubbish!'"

"Sir Cavy has been here. I presume you will submit your opinion to his, and I have given you his opinion. He has ordered her to Torquay; she goes to-morrow; but there is this difficulty;—for the life of me, I can't think who I am to get to take her."

"I am sorry I can't volunteer. I am full of engagements, and several of them could not be broken without great inconvenience to other people; but surely some other friend might be able to go. What has become of your old German governess?"

"She is in Germany, with a family."

"No one else? Let me see; ah!—Torquay, you say?"

"Torquay."

"An idea has just occurred to me—so lucky!—my sister Adela has a house there, this winter, and I am sure she would be delighted to receive Esmè. I'll telegraph to her, at once, if you please, to offer. She will be charmed to have her, I know, if she is at home; unfortunately, that's always doubtful with her. I'll telegraph, however, if you wish; shall I?"

"You are more than good, Lady Octopa. Pray do; a thousand thanks!"

As Lady Octopa had written, the day before, at great length to Lady Adela, explaining her purposes, and making the very proposal in question, her telegram only asked for a telegraphic reply as to whether Esmè could be received on the following day; and the reply, "Charmed to see you to-morrow," was sent to Esmè herself.

So Esmè went to Torquay, and Lady Octopa thought she saw her way to success at last.

CHAPTER LXIV.

It was not Lady Octopa's object that Esmè should rapidly improve in health; and Esmè met her wishes by making no improvement, at Torquay. The mental distress was still there, so that the nervous depression continued. Her hostess was a weak edition of Lady Octopa, and believed in her astuter sister, to the extent of being her humble vassal at all times, and her willing instrument whenever her services were required. Inspired, then, by her sister, Lady Adela secured the services of an alarmist doctor, who was so devoted to his profession that, when he got a case, he made the most of it, and parted with it grudgingly. Esmè's case exactly suited him; for a case "on the nerves" is, from its nature, of an almost unlimited ductility, and may, in fact, be protracted according to the convenience of the doctor himself, whose dictum, that grave nervous depression exists, can hardly

be controverted by lay opinion, or even by the personal assertion of the patient. After Esmè had been for a week or two under the "anxious observation" of this professional enthusiast, it was suggested to him by Lady Adela, under Octopian inspiration, that a consultation might be a good thing. The doctor thought that it *might* be a *very* good thing—for a consultation gives a sort of fillip to a jog-trot case; and a consultation took place, with the sanction of Lord Germistoune, who was now quite prostrated from the effects of his attack, which had been unusually severe.

The results of the consultation were manipulated, in a gloomy sense, by Lady Adela; and, to the effect that the learned leeches considered the case critical, were transmitted to Lord Germistoune, who was greatly alarmed and distressed thereby. He sent for Sir Cavy and begged him to go down, at once, to Torquay, and make a most searching investigation of his daughter's malady. Sir Cavy went down promptly, returned, and came, in person, to make his report to the anxious father.

"Well, doctor, good news I hope?" exclaimed his lordship, eagerly, when Sir Cavy presented himself.

The doctor shook his head, and sighed slightly.

"Speak out, man! don't keep me in suspense."

"I can see no improvement in my dear young friend," he said.

"Are they treating her properly?"

"Oh yes, very properly, ve-ry much so, indeed; but the symptoms don't yield,—they develop. It is my duty to say this."

"Good God! what do you recommend?"

"To be frank with you, my dear lord, although the young lady has said *nothing* to me, it is my duty to say that I can see there is some brooding sorrow which is at the root of the mischief. Until we get rid of that brooding sorrow, the symptoms will continue to develop, and I cannot be answerable for the results. We may go on with the present treatment—I can recommend no other; but I am not sanguine of its efficacy —*not* sanguine." The doctor shook his head, again slightly sighed, and went on: "I think that, if your lordship were to deal frankly, as a parent may, with Miss Douglas, you would probably get a clue which might guide your action in some way; or, since you are now unable to move, you might get some lady friend of tact and experience to make the delicate investigation. Between ourselves, my dear lord, I should not say that Lady

Adela is *quite* the person for such a commission —charming, brilliant, amiable, but not *quite* the person."

"She is a born idiot."

"Tut! tut! my lord — sharp, that, ve-ry sharp! Well, then, in your wide circle of friends there must be others who——"

"I'll think it over, doctor. You have made me very miserable, very miserable;—why the d—l should *I* be made so miserable? Everything goes wrong; no man was ever so persecuted and beset by all kinds of accursed circumstances."

"Patience! patience! my dear lord; we shall come round yet. Let us discover this brooding sorrow and eliminate it, and——"

"Confound the brooding sorrow!"

"Precisely; let us do that, and all will be well."

"Don't play with my words, Sir Cavy. Go away. You fatigue and irritate me."

The miserable old man lay awake all that night, now stung by his conscience, now maddened by his pride, now softened by love and pity. At one moment the sweet pale face of his daughter came before him, and he thought of her as suffering, perhaps dying;—this dear child, who had been an angel in his home, all the days of

her life, till these evil times had come. At the next moment the thought of the "Glencairns" would flash up, casting every tender feeling into remote shadow, and setting ablaze all the fierce elements of the old man's nature.

Thus was his mind alternately worked upon, by good and evil, as the circle of his feverish thoughts went round, through the long hours of that sleepless night, and morning found him utterly prostrate.

He sent for Lady Octopa, who went to him on the instant.

"I have invited you to come here, cousin Octopa," he said, "because you are a woman of the world and not a humbug, and I wish to consult you. You have heard from Lady Adela?"

"Yes; and I have seen Sir Cavy this morning, in consequence."

"What did Sir Cavy say to you?" asked Lord Germistoune, eagerly.

"Do you wish to know his *very* words?"

"Of course I do."

"'The girl is dying because her heart is breaking.' That's what *he* says."

Lord Germistoune covered his face with his hands.

"I had no idea," Lady Octopa went on, "that

this affair with the Master of Dunerlacht had been so very serious. It's not the way of young people nowadays, mercifully; but poor Esmè is an exception, it seems. I was coming to you, this morning, without being sent for, because, after what Adela and the doctor said, I could not take the responsibility of keeping you in ignorance of the real state of things. You'll have to make a choice between two evils, Germistoune; and you'll have to make up your mind at once; I can tell you *that.*" She paused, but Lord Germistoune, with his teeth clenched, and his hands pressed tightly to his face, as if in a physical spasm of pain, made no remark, and she went on—

"You must decide between losing your daughter altogether, and allowing her to marry a man whom you hate."

Lord Germistoune gave a sort of muffled shout behind his hands. "Ah! you may roar, like a bull, but that's how it stands: and, of course, there's no question at all about the decision; a sensible man of the world, and an affectionate father, like you, can't hesitate. Of course, it's a horrible nuisance marrying your daughter to a man you detest,—I know that by experience—(I hated Harriet's husband the first

moment I set eyes upon him, and I loathe the sight of him now),—and it's a trial to one's pride, and so on; but we can't murder our children to gratify our pride—*that's* clear."

At last Lord Germistoune spoke—

"Does Sir Cavy think that, if this—this accursed resource were sanctioned, she would recover?"

"Sir Cavy is very cautious in expressing an opinion, but he says that, on the whole, he sees no reason to doubt that she would recover, if her happiness were restored; while, if you insist upon her being miserable, you will certainly sign her death-warrant."

"I almost made up my mind this morning, and now I *have* made it up. It's infernal torture and agony to me to do it; I don't know what I've done to deserve such agony; but I can't see my child die. It will kill me,—I know that, but my life is wretched now, so *that* doesn't greatly signify,—it will kill me to see her marry this—this *person;* but she must marry him."

"Of course she must, and equally of course, it won't kill you. In the name of common sense, why should it? I hear but one opinion of the Master; he is a very good man, and he

is full of promise. If there were no money it would be different, of course, for a fine moral nature won't pay the expenses of an establishment. Why do you hate him so?"

"I hate him—because—I hate him."

"Well, I admit that that is a very sound reason; but you'll get over it."

"Never! His father——"

"His father is not going to marry Esmè."

"Look here, Lady Octopa, my consent is extorted by a morbid freak of nature; but I'll make my conditions."

"Certainly."

"I must never see this Lord Dunerlacht."

"Of course not."

"And his son, only in a formal way."

"That's quite reasonable."

"And I must have a distinct understanding that the title is not to be dragged into commerce."

"I should think there will be no difficulty about that."

"That is a *sine qua non*. And they must have Dunerlacht to live at, as *their own* house, and money enough to live in proper style."

"Quite fair. And now, you know, when you have made up your mind to do an un-

pleasant thing it's better to do it at once; and, besides, moments are precious. Think of the dear child's condition."

"What steps *am* I to take?"

"Send for the Master at once, and settle the matter. I'll go myself and send him to you."

"I'm not equal to the abominable agitation."

"Nonsense; you'll be all the better for having the matter off your mind. Indecision is worse than anything. I'll go and send him."

Lord Germistoune said nothing, and she went.

She went straight to Cosmo's rooms and entered, with her usual *nonchalance*.

"It's all settled, Master," she said. "I told you I should bring it about; and now you may congratulate me—and yourself."

"Lady Octopa! can you—do you mean that Lord Germistoune has consented?"

"Yes, he is now prepared to say, 'Curse ye, my children, be wretched!'"

"But *consented!* It is incredible!"

"Don't take my word for it, then. You are to go directly to him and receive his parental malediction. Go at once; don't stand sentimentalising, but go at once. He wishes to see you, and good resolutions sometimes evaporate.

Mind you be very quiet with him; stand anything he says, and submit to all his conditions; they're not alarming. Go away, now." And she almost hustled the Master out of his rooms.

The interview between him and Lord Germistoune was as brief as it was strange. When Cosmo was announced, the old gentleman lay perfectly still in bed and kept his face covered with his hands, so as to defend himself from the obnoxious aspect of his visitor. He showed no symptom of taking the initiative, so Cosmo found it necessary to say—

"I understand, my lord, that you are good enough to desire an interview with me."

Then Lord Germistoune made answer from behind his intrenchments—

"An interview extorted by the facts that your conduct has destroyed the peace of my family, and brought my daughter to the brink of death. I don't wish to argue, or talk about the matter at any length. Half-a-dozen words will suffice. You have wrecked my unhappy girl, in mind and body—you have destroyed her life; but I cannot take the responsibility of causing her actual death, which, it appears, might probably happen, were she to be longer thwarted in the morbid and disastrous affection

which she has conceived for you; and my prohibition of the marriage is therefore withdrawn."

Cosmo thought it prudent to hold his peace, and Lord Germistoune went on—

"There are one or two conditions to my consent which you will note and consider essential —as follows:—

"I must never be brought into contact with your father.

"My intercourse with you must be rare and formal.

"The title which your father now possesses must not be employed as a trade advertisement. He must trade under a pseudonym. Dunerlacht Castle must be made over to you as a residence, and an income suitable to the style and dignity of the place must be secured to you. Are you in a position to guarantee these conditions?"

"Yes, Lord Germistoune, I am; I know that my father will accede to them all. I trust, however, that time will alter the condition which affects the relations between you and me. I do trust that our intercourse may, at least, become friendly, if it cannot be affectionate."

"Our intercourse shall, as I have said, be rare and formal. That is definitive."

"I presume, my lord, that you will not make restrictions as to the date of the marriage?"

"Considering the grounds on which alone it is sanctioned, there can be no objection to its early accomplishment, but the contrary. You can settle the matter with my daughter; I wash my hands of the whole deplorable transaction. I will not detain you, sir."

"My lord, you will give me your hand before I go? Pray remember that I am, at least, a gentleman."

"As a matter of form, I will do so."

A cold, sharp, aquiline claw just touched Cosmo's hand, and the meeting was at an end.

Within a couple of hours, Cosmo was on his way to Torquay, not having given himself time, in any way, to prepare Esmè, who was, of course, unconscious of the friendly plot of which she was the centre,—who had no suspicion of the strange process of evolution, by which it was designed that her joy should develop from her sorrow.

CHAPTER LXV.

"The Master of Dunerlacht!"

When the servant threw open the door of Lady Adela's drawing-room, and made this announcement, Esmè was sitting there alone. It was thoughtless and man-like of Cosmo to come on her, thus unawares. She heard the name; she beheld her lover; the joy in his face flashed into her mind the glad import of his presence there. But even the little fringe of light, which tells of a silver lining, had faded from the cloud which overshadowed her life, and the sudden blaze of happiness was more than she could bear; it overwhelmed and blinded her. Everything became dark, and she would have fallen, had not Cosmo caught her in his arms.

. . . . . .

"Is it a dream?" were the first words she murmured, after an interval of half-unconsciousness.

"No, dearest; it is the end of dreams. The night is over, and winter is gone."

. . . . . .

Often on the summit of some grand Highland mountain, we find ourselves wrapped in a sudden twilight of cloud and mist. We can see nothing but our dim prison-walls, and we dare not move, for we know that, around us, there are precipices and danger manifold. The vapour-masses mould themselves to peak and ledge, and cling about the rocks with cruel immobility. We feel that we are lost, and our hearts fail us, for the day is far spent.

Then, suddenly comes a breath from heaven, which whispers the mandate of our release. In an instant we see the blue vault and the glorious sun; the walls of our environment are transformed to flying wreaths of light and beauty; below us is the sea, sapphire-like, smiling in its summer sleep; and, beyond it, sun-bright stretches of champaign, and billowy foliage of gladsome woods, and the pure purple of cloudless hills, glowing like gems in the horizon's golden zone.

CHAPTER LXVI.

Happiness is the best of remedies ; and, on a bright summer morning, six weeks after Esmè's lover had found her drooping like a dying flower, an immense assemblage which thronged the church of St. Peter's in Eaton Square, beheld in her a bride, the radiance of whose beauty and happiness seemed to express the spirit of the blithe and beauteous summer time.

There was a "movement" of admiration as she passed up the aisle supported by, or rather, as it seemed, supporting her father, who moved with tottering gait but head erect, and wearing on his grim old features an expression which would have done credit to Agamemnon, in the act of leading Iphigenia to the sacrifice. A few minutes earlier, the Master of Dunerlacht had entered, attended by Tom Wyedale, the latter radiant with triumph at having, by a series of masterly manœuvres, supplanted Phil Denwick

in the post of "best man," for which Phil had been designed by the bridegroom.

Though the church was crowded the invited guests were few in number; but, among them, near the altar, were to be observed certain forms familiar to us as having played some part in the drama now drawing to a close.

Mrs Ravenhall wept aggressively in the foremost pew, where she had established herself next to the 15th Baron Dunerlacht. From his lordship's other side, his sister, Griselda, cast baleful glances on the happy scene, and confided to her brother, in a rusty whisper, that Viscount Germistoune satisfied her conceptions of a cockatrice. Lady Octopa was there, majestically content; her air seemed to say, "Behold my handiwork!" And Lady Adela was, of course, also there, to whom Sir Cavy murmured slily, that the air of Torquay was very balmy, and had really worked miracles for his dear young friend. A few others, whom we have met, were within the charmed circle, and a few others whom we have not met; and, outside it, one or two not unknown to us—conspicuously, Lady Bugles, whose sombre head loomed darkly behind the splendid coruscations of the bridal party.

When the knot was tied, Cosmo and his bride moved down the aisle, under the inevitable thunder of the "Wedding March." The family romance was universally known, and the young couple were surveyed with breathless interest as they passed. People said that a nobler-looking pair had never met their eyes. If these admiring critics had known that their external gifts were poor, compared with their graces of mind and spirit, they would have considered them still more an exceptional couple.

The wedding breakfast was given at Lady Octopa's house, the abode of Lord Germistoune, in Hans Place, not being equal to the occasion. At first, it threatened to be a *triste* affair; for the well-known antagonism of the two old lords, who had to be separated at table by a wide zone of neutrality, cast a certain gloom over the proceedings. Tom Wyedale, however, exerted himself in the most manful way to counteract this; and, since no one else would make a speech, he spoke for everybody. He proposed toasts and responded to the same himself, and thus personated, in rapid succession, the bridesmaids, the bride's father, the bridegroom's father, Lady Octopa, and others, including Miss Griselda Douglas—(who carried

away the firm conviction that Tom was "The Man of Sin")—with a power of reckless fun born of wit, goodwill, and dry champagne, which worked, at last, a complete success. In his oratorical dealings with Lord Germistoune, he employed all the subtle tact with which he had originally conquered that difficult personage, and at last succeeded in producing a smile on his iron features. Tom's genial nature always prompted him to make things pleasant, and he saw, at this critical banquet, the chance of making things pleasant for the young couple, in a permanent way. So he spared no pains, and, perhaps, his pains were not altogether wasted. It is certain that, ever after, he took immense credit to himself, as the author of happier relations between Lord Germistoune and his son-in-law; and explained that, if Phil Denwick had been placed in the prominent position of "best man," nothing of the sort could have occurred. It was, he said, with this view that he had supplanted Phil, who was "really quite an outsider where anything like *savoir faire* was concerned." When the hour of departure had arrived, Esmè went into a little ante-room to take a private farewell of her father. When the old man came to her, and saw her, thus

about to leave him finally—saw, finally passing away from him that dear companionship which, ever since Esmè's birth, had preserved *some* tender feeling in his nature, he was at length overcome. There flowed into his mind a thousand touching recollections of her happy, innocent childhood, and her happy, loving, dutiful youth. His heart was moved; he took her gently in his arms; he could not speak, but he looked at her, fondly and sadly, through eyes dimmed with an unwonted moisture.

"Dear papa," said Esmè, at last, "your heart has come back to me; promise that you will never take it away again."

Her father kissed her, and she went on, encouraged—

"You wish me to be *quite* happy, papa, do you not?" and again, in the same tender fashion, the old man signified his assent.

"But how can I be quite, *quite* happy, when there is enmity and coldness between those who are dearest to me? O papa! papa! you do know—because you said so yourself, even before you knew that he was a Douglas—you *do* know how good and chivalrous he is; and it is not his fault that we have lost Dunerlacht; and I know that he will respect all your wishes, because

he feels your hardships so keenly—if you only, only knew how keenly! O papa! be kind to him, and he will love you as I love you, and we shall be together again, and you will not be lonely; how can I ever be happy if you are lonely and desolate? You *wish* me to be happy, papa? *make* me happy by saying that you trust him and will be his friend. Say it, dear papa, say it; I will not leave you till you say it!"

She clung to him and poured forth her words with passionate utterance; and the heart of the old man was turned.

"You shall be happy, dear child," he said, at last, "if I can make you happy. Bring your husband."

Cosmo was soon there, and the old lord, by a supreme inspiration and effort of his Good Angel, spoke thus—

"You are the future head of our house, Master," he said, "and I cannot deny that you are an honourable man. It is a great thing to know *that*. It is a great thing to know that you will not discredit the name. We must try to be friends. You have taken away from me the Douglas lands and the old Douglas title, and you are taking away from me this child, almost the last, and certainly the best, of my posses-

sions. I grudge them all to you;—God help me! I am only a man. But I will try to like you, for her sake; I swear I will. Here is my hand."

To which the Master replied—

"And for her sake, Lord Germistoune, I will swear, not only to like you, but to be your son, if you will allow me. The Douglas lands and honours are great and splendid, but she is above them all, and I would gladly have given them all, a thousand times, to win her own dear self."

They clasped hands cordially, and the cup of Esmè's happiness was full.

Shortly after, volleys of rice and satin slippers darkened the Belgravian atmosphere, in which haze the lovers should now disappear from the pages of an orthodox novel. Let us have one little glimpse of them, however, after their return from the wedding trip, which, wherever else it took them, took them, we may be sure, to the Lake of Como.

When Tom made the genealogical discovery in Cosmo's rooms, it may be remembered that the spirit of prophecy fell upon him, and that he uttered certain predictions. All those bearing on the lawsuit had been literally fulfilled; and now the highly important one which foretold

that Dunerlacht grouse should die by Tom's hand on the "Twelfth" of the following year, was verified. For Cosmo and Esmè returned to their Highland home a little before that anniversary, and Tom was the life of the party which came together there on the 11th. It had occurred to him that his amusement would be enhanced, if the Marquis (for whose society Tom had, what Lord Germistoune called, "a morbid inclination") were also of the party; so of course he had managed that. The Marquis *was* there, in all his mysterious panoply, wearing his *cor de chasse*, without molestation, and breathing forth threats against the *fauna* of Glenerlacht, which, if carried into effect, must leave the district without fur or feather.

The managing partner of Glencairn & Co.—now on the highroad to recover its ancient prosperity and *prestige*—was also present. In him was to be recognised our friend Phil Denwick, whose energy and ability had nobly seconded Cosmo's efforts to procure for him the promotion he had lately obtained. The senior partner of his firm, who "traded under a pseudonym," was not of the party. He was immersed in his old pursuits at Edlisfort; toiling to rebuild the edifice of his fortunes, which had been levelled by

the reckless hands of the now secluded Hopper. Nor did the bride's father adorn the scene; but his daughter was at ease about him. In the agreeable company of his friend Sir Cavy he was enjoying the salubrious waters and distractions of Homburg, and wrote cheerfully, and in a spirit of peace and goodwill. The party at the castle was full of pleasant elements, and there were no regrettable blanks, even Mrs Ravenhall's absence not being specially remarked from that point of view.

A great bag was achieved on the "Twelfth." In addition to what Davidson called "a tremendyus birds," it displayed a few novel elements, and, conspicuously, a very fine sheep which had imprudently loitered within the sphere of the Marquis's operations. That he was dubbed of the *Toison d'or* by his friend "Torm" was a matter of course, and that "Le massacre d'un mouton" became a favourite sequel to Tom's narrative of "La bête fauve sans tête," which, as developed by his daring fancy, had achieved a wide popularity.

It may be remembered that the next day was Esmè's birthday; and, it being her twenty-first birthday, at night, twenty-one rockets went up, from beside the bonfire on Dunerlacht, and the

tenants' banquet and ball took place. In short, the occasion was commemorated with the old rejoicings, but with a relaxation of feudal observance which was much to the advantage of Mr and Mrs M'Haffie's nervous systems. As it was also a red-letter day in the calendar of their love, Cosmo did not go to the moor, but remained at home, and kept the doubly sacred anniversary with his wife.

In the afternoon they visited the ruins and the Fall, for the first time since their return,—for the first time, that is to say, since that spot had been the scene of their desolate farewells.

Once more they sat down, side by side, above the great abyss; and once more, amidst a hundred landmarks, traced their love's familiar story. Here it had trembled on the brink of a first utterance: here it had mingled the voice of its anguish with the lamentations of the mighty waters; here they had seen in the foam-bow's arch the symbol of a way across the storm and stress of adverse circumstance. Anguish, discord, lamentation, were silenced now,—drowned in the great music which filled their lives to overflowing. The foam-bow had been quenched, but quenched by the sovereign glory of the sun.

Thus they sat, through the happy hours, gilding, with fond lovers' fancies, the refined gold of their peace and thankfulness and joy. It was not till the day was dying, that an interruption came to remind them of hungry guests awaiting them at home. It came in the form of old Maggie; once again that inevitable apparition stood before them, and sang and said, in her old style:—

> "'Hey the bonny! ho the bonny!
> Hey the bonny breast-knots!
> Blithe and merry were we a',
> When we put on the breast-knots!'

Ye're welcome hame, my bonny leddy! and ye're welcome hame, my braw maister! Eh, but ye *are* welcome hame!—'tane and tither, baith thegither.' Praise be blessed!"

"Thank you, Maggie, we're very, very glad to be home, and very glad to see you again," said Esmè.

"And we've lost no time in paying you a visit, Maggie," said Cosmo.

"Veesit *me?* Hoot awa', my bonny Maister! hoot awa'! Eh, Maister! I tellt ye I was nae spae-wife, but am I *no* a spae-wife? 'Ye'll be a baron bauld,' quo' I; and are ye *no* a baron bauld? I said ye wus sly: and eh, Maister! but ye *wus* sly. Ye've ta'en a'thing—gudes an'

gear, house an' ha', mailen an' biggen—an' a lass that's the wale o' the warld, forbye. I'm a spae-wife noo, and aiblins ye'll cross auld Maggie's han' wi' siller, for the luck that's come and the gude that's comin'."

Cosmo gave her a piece of gold, and wishing her good-night, he and Esmè turned, in haste, to go.

"What's yer hurry?" cried Maggie. "Bide a wee, till I sing ye 'Huntingtower.'"

"Not to-night, Maggie; we're terribly late."

"Ae verse, then?"

"Well, then, one, but only one."

"I'll sing the last; it's the bonniest:—

> "'Huntingtower is mine, lassie!
> Huntingtower is mine, Jeanie!
> Huntingtower an a' Blairgower,
> And a' that's MINE IS THINE, lassie!'"

THE END.

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